Disability in the Bible

Beliefs and connotations of disability in biblical manuscripts: a qualitative study

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Abstract

The meaning of disability has historically been sustained in religious beliefs and stereotypes. Misconceptions of disability have made inclusion, of those in a disadvantage position, a major issue. However, disagreements in the definition of disability have brought diverse models aiming to define it, centered on its origin. Explanatory models of disability urge to find an ideal that would lead to the inclusion of disabled.

To comprehend the stereotypes and exclusion that disabled have to face, it appears to be essential to reach the roots for those beliefs. Most of the beliefs connected with disability in the western countries are associated with Christianity. Being the Bible the principal source for Christianity dogma, its analysis seems crucial; thus, the method of content analysis having the Bible as primary source of data will be used for this study.

Finally, the findings obtained in this paper will be worthwhile to understand how beliefs and connotations of disability have adapted and transmitted to our time. This document expectancy is to contribute in the knowledge concerning the origin of dogmas towards disability, with the aim of avoid exclusion based on those beliefs.
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Preface

As a student from the master program in Special Needs Education from University of Oslo, during summer 2014 I travelled to Laos to do my research work. The reason for this destination was that my research had focused on the description of attitudes towards disability and the quality of life of disabled, influenced by their religious beliefs, having chosen Buddhism and Christianity as targets. The study was going to take place between Spain and Laos, consisting on some interviews to find out how religious beliefs influenced in the quality of life of people with disabilities. For the data collection in Laos, I had contacted Save the Children Norway, which offered me the contact with their office in Luang Prabang. Here, a program in inclusive education had been taking place between 1993-2009. Thus, with the support of Save the Children Norway and knowing about their inclusive program I flew to Laos. Once I was already in Luang Prabang this is what happened:

-On the 15/09/2014 I finally contacted Save the Children in Luang Prabang. Once I arrived to the office I talked with the manager of the branch there. He explained me that the topic of my research was very sensitive, as I was aware, religion must be treated carefully and with sensitivity. How was my surprise when I mentioned that in internet, there was a report of an Inclusive Educational Program developed by Save the Children Norway in Luang Prabang\(^1\); the manager suddenly changed his gesture and became more alert and nervous. He told me that they were collaborating with a Special Needs School funded in Luang Prabang but the authorities did not know anything about it, so their work was “clandestine”. For this reason, they wrote on a piece of paper the name of the school and on the other side sketched a map, providing me with some indications to be able to locate the school. They could not take me there or come with me because they were afraid of being seen by a policeman; they would end up in serious trouble, which surprised me because they knew about my visit and from Oslo I was told they would offer me their assistance. Definitely, things started not to go as I expected.

Next day, I went to the area where the school was supposed to be. Whit my drawn map, not very detailed, I assumed to be near the school when I first asked two women in a local shop; they were friendly but did not speak any English.

\(^1\) \[http://www.eenet.org.uk/resources/docs/A_Quality_Education_For_All_LaoPDR.pdf\]
Anyhow, I had the name of the school written in Lao language so I thought it would help me to find the school easily.

When I saw a local shop I approached the woman attending there. Thus, after salutation I showed her the piece of paper; when she read the name of the school her facial expression became unsmiling and waving her hands I was told to leave and they turned her back to me. Subsequently, surprised by that negative reaction I rode the bicycle towards another shop some hundred meters away; I was on the edge of the city, so there are no so many houses or people to ask. However, it seemed to me to be easier to find the school because there were fewer buildings around. So, I went to the other shop where I found a woman with a younger girl; I proceeded as before because they did not speak English. The reaction was similar, smiling and welcoming faces until I showed them the name of the school on the paper. This woman became serious and acted like I should leave. Then, the girl shared some words with her and then stared at me. She looked around so nobody was near us. Next, she showed three fingers from her hand and pointed to the left. After that, they turned and left me alone.

I understood that gesture as meaning the third house or street on the left. Thus, going left I found a big house with no signs on it. At that time, a young girl was leaving opening the fence so I showed her the name of the school; she hesitated looking at me and then she went inside the building and talked to another woman. They nodded and told me that was the school. They did not speak English at all, so I tried to make them understand that I wanted to talk with the person in charge, who from Save the Children, I was told to be a foreigner woman.

They told me then that I should follow a kid, who was deaf, in the bicycle, what made me realized I was in the right path. We rode our bicycles for around 5 minutes in back streets until we reached another building, pretty far from any asphalted road. This building had a sign, written in English, naming a special needs school. Once we were there, the kid gave me a huge smile and came back with his bike. In this school, I saw two classes with disabled students. I asked for the person in charged, who was a nun, but she told me that she was from Laos, so I did not understand why the manager told me she was a foreigner lady. I explained her how I had contacted with Save the Children and was sent there. I also explained the aim of my research, which she told me was the first news she ever got about it. Following, she expressed that it would be difficult to do the interviews because the children at the school were all deaf. I suggested that I would find a translator from Lao to English so I would just
need someone to translate from sign language into Lao language. Anyhow, she refused my proposal because as she explained, if the police would found a foreigner collaborating or doing any kind of work there, we all would be in trouble; they would ask for my passport and interfere not to have me there. Being curious about all this secrecy and fear to the local authorities, I explained this nun how difficult was for me to find someone to indicate where the school was, even tough was obvious by their reactions that they knew the place. Her answer was this: "local people think this school is not important".

After trying to convince the nun about my fair intentions in my research and that the aim of it was in benefit of the students, she just suggested to go to Vientiane, the capital of Laos, where they were not so "conservative and police would not interfere". However, once I was in Vientiane I found really hard to carry on with the research after so many obstacles so I decided to change the focus on how to carry out the research.

Nevertheless, I found really interesting the events occurred in Luang Prabang. First, I believe that the main reason why police would cause trouble having a foreigner in the school is due to be a special needs school; I believe this because I saw many international schools broadly advertised throughout Laos. Secondly, the fact that the special needs school had a nun as chief in a city known for being the religious capital in Laos, made me think that there are strong religious beliefs towards disability by the Buddhist community. I am also aware of the complex political situation in the country, which may have influenced people’s communication with a foreigner.

In conclusion, I realized on first hand that there are some areas in research of special sensitivity. Some of these are religion and disability, especially if they are related within the same topic. The first attempt of this research was quite different as the one finally done. The pioneer project had the intention of developing a qualitative research based on the information collected from interviewing two samples of people with disabilities who were under the influence of religious beliefs. However, to collect the data became an impossible task and the research had to be modified as it is now. As a consequence of this "failure", new questions emerged and formed the new research topic. Being aware of the challenging of the religion-disability topic, a new study has been leaded, based on the religious literature, which provides with guidance and commands, hoping to understand where attitudes towards disability come from.
1. Introduction

People with disabilities have historically been subject of discrimination and rejection (Illagan, 2000). For instance, Clapton (1997), while discussing about the meaning of disability during the 4th and 5th centuries BC in Europe stated, "Disability was seen as a result of evil spirits, the devil, witchcraft or God’s displeasure, indicative of spiritual or supernatural causes." (p.422). Moving forward on time, Clapton (1997) also described the development of reactions towards disability in the Middle Age, turning into signs of blessing or interpreted as representations of "suffering Christ". Furthermore, Claassens (2013) understands those stereotypes and misinterpretations of disabilities, as having gone through history until the present moment "Probably the most daunting challenges facing people with disabilities are the stereotypes and misguided perceptions regarding disability that pervade society today" (p.169).

As shown above, disability has been explained by means of religious beliefs in human history. Thus, stereotypes and beliefs, which have been altered through times, are still currently manifested in diverse forms. To be able to understand how disability is explained by religious means, will be necessary to identify the sources where religion provides sense to disabilities. Therefore, religions have given meaning to disability through beliefs that have been transferred mostly through literature. Those texts have been almost unaltered throughout centuries, within a cult, conditioning how the community perceives disability in a religious setting.

As has been the stated above, perceptions and meanings of disability have been changing through times while literature remained mostly unchanged, with minor exceptions of translations to different languages or the evolution of language itself. Therefore, how could be the meaning of disability varying so significantly if the literature remained almost unaltered?

Rogoff’s (2003) vision of cultural diffusion could assist to answer this question; she defined 'culture' as a dynamic process, which keeps developing; hence, “culture is not static” (p.51). It constantly changes and adapts to new times; accordingly, prejudices and stereotypes are usually ways to transfer beliefs, sometimes being modified, but transmitted through different periods within the culture.
It has been described how in the transmission of religious beliefs and stereotypes involving disability there is one a mutable factor, which is the 'culture', and another part that feeds the culture and remains intact, 'literature'. Consequently, if religious beliefs in a culture change throughout times, while the literature feeding those beliefs remain unaltered, it seems that those beliefs are grounded on the way the literature is interpreted.

It is the aim of this master’s thesis to describe how religious literature describes and perceives disability on its texts. During this research, the relation between disability and religious dogmas will be analysed; with other words, how disability is understood and described by religious literature. This study will focus only in the Christianity, which is the major religion in western countries, and its principal source of literature, The Holy Bible.

1.1 Relevance of the study

As Claassens (2013) pointed out, people with disabilities face discrimination and stigma based on religious beliefs. This rejection from the mainstream society is a major barrier towards inclusion. To be able to break boundaries and promote inclusion it will be necessary to understand the origin of those beliefs causing stereotypes and misconceptions. According to Olyan (2008) there is an analogous stigmatization and marginalization between the biblical text and the suffered by people with disabilities nowadays in western countries. This opinion supports the idea of a tight link between the biblical lectures and its reflection in the society, from the time it was written to the present.

The Bible’s importance as guidance for many communities has also grown in the last centuries to become the most read book in humanity's history. Raphael (2008) provides two reasons why studying disability in the Bible is a relevant topic: First, because disability is foremost human experience, and second, due a rich source of representations of disability the Bible encompasses related with western culture. In addition, the influence of religious attitudes is so widely spread that even some religious beliefs have been adopted by the non-religious communities, especially in westernized culture, as suggested by Raphael (2008). Finally, another reason reinforcing the relevance of this study is that Christianity is the most predominant religion in Europe in addition to other parts of the world (see Figure 1).
Furthermore, stigma towards disabilities has been transmitted from generation to generation through culture. This seems one of the most daunting barriers to reach inclusion. Perhaps the only efficient manner to break with the transition of these stereotypes is to understand where they come from and how they have been transmitted. In addition, it appears to be an important piece of the stereotype persistence how people with disabilities perceive themselves. Thus, the manner disabled understand their disability will also influence the “others” response.

1.2 Study objectives

The main objective of this master thesis is to describe disability as it is represented in The Bible. Thus, to reach this purpose, the study will follow two main directions:

- To describe disability in the literature, focusing on its origin and connotations.
- To explore the relation between disabled and their community based on their beliefs.
1.3 Research Questions

For this research, the main question has been stated as:

*How is disability described in The Bible?*

Moreover, this main question is complemented by two sub questions:

*What is the origin of disability?*

*How are the attitudes towards disability?*

1.4 Personal motivation

I have been told and I have experienced differences between cultural groups and their expected types of behaviour, consequence of a variety of beliefs and norms. During this master we have extendedly talked and argued about the term multiculturalism and its importance to understand one person’s feelings, attitudes, and beliefs. One of the other main topics throughout this course, being discussed recurrently over these two years, was the term inclusion, and how culture, prejudices, beliefs and other factors can prevent it to be.

Religion has been from the beginning of humanity and still nowadays one of the main parts of any culture. I understand that being an enormous part of a culture, religion coexist parallel to the culture embedded.

I was educated in a Catholic school for fourteen years and I am a citizen of a country where Christianity has historically been the official religion. Moreover, my first contact with other completely different religions happened six years ago, while I was traveling around Asia, more specifically India and Nepal. During the trip I experienced some interaction with new cults, which reflected in many ways how the inhabitants interacted, and how culture was built.

Once, I met a Tibetan woman living in Kathmandu and we decided to visit some Buddhist temples. At some point a wasp bite me, and my first reaction was to smash it, but she suddenly stopped me and grabbed the wasp on her hands. She also took my bottle of water and threw some of it on the wasp. She waited until it recovered and flew away. Afterwards, she explained me that as a Buddhist, she believed in reincarnation and karma; with her own
words she told me that the wasp could be her grandfather or mine, and how we interact with other living beings will decide what I would be on my next life. This way of thinking made me realize that our beliefs will guide the manner we interact with our environment.

1.5 Research method in brief

This master thesis will be founded on the data collected from The Bible. It is the aim of this research to describe and interpret what religious sacred literature understands and states about disability. However, disability is a modern term, which is being used since from not long ago; thus, links between other words that refers to disability will be used as a bridge to collect data. Nevertheless, more details about the methods used to satisfy the research questions will be found on chapter four.

1.6 Outline of the thesis

The overall structure of this thesis takes the form of five chapters, in which each one provides a brief introduction of what will be detailed on it. Chapter one is the introduction and background of the thesis. It entails an overview of religious beliefs towards disability and more concretely in Christianity followed by the most relevant findings in this topic. In addition, it provides the motivating factors behind the research, along with problem statement and significance of the study. Therefore, research objectives and research question are highlighted. Finally, an overview of the different chapters of this research is offered.

Chapter two describes theoretical perspectives in relation with the topic to exam, disability and religion. It is aim of this chapter to show an account of the relevant information existing about the topic, with the goal of reaching a deeper understanding about it. This chapter will also contain a list of significant terms interrelated with the topic, as well as the connexion between them. The literature collected in this chapter will be discussed during the analysis carried in chapter four.

It is in Chapter three that will be described the research methodology, following a detailed account of the process taken during this investigation. This chapter includes a description of
the method chosen for the research and the reasons behind this election. In addition, it will be also reviewed the validity, reliability and limitations of the study.

During Chapter four the presentation of findings will be displayed along with the discussion. It is the aim of this chapter to present the findings according to the research design procedures described in chapter three; the results will be compared with the literature reviewed for this project. For this reason, there will be at this point recommendable to go back to chapter two.

Chapter five is the conclusion based on the findings obtained. It is in this chapter that will be judge the results obtained, and how this research could contribute to the scientific knowledge in the field. Moreover, it will be also discussed how could have the research been directed differently and possible directions for further research.
Chapter 2. Literature review

2.1 Introduction

Throughout this chapter, an overview of the relevant literature related with the topic of study will be reviewed. This literature has been chosen with the aim to provide the necessary knowledge about the topic, and to show previous relevant studies and available resources within the field. Subsequently, a list of terminology is required to define the study of research. In addition, previous investigations and theoretical frames related with this study will also be presented. A display of diverse paradigms accounting the main terms will also be detailed during the literature review. The material presented in this chapter will be compared with the data obtained in chapter four, during the analysis and discussion of findings.

2.2 Key concepts

Following, concepts of special relevance for the understanding of this thesis will take place; those terms will be defined and related to each other, with the purpose of delimiting the focus of the study and provide enough understanding to establish the research.

2.2.1 How culture is transmitted and its evolution

As it was presented in the introduction, stereotypes and misconceptions concerning disability tend not to disappear, but rather changing or developing towards new ones. Allport (1954/1979) pointed out "It is possible for a stereotype to grow in defiance of all evidence" (p.189-190). Thus, stereotypes are highly persistent even against proof, which focus the interest on how they are transmitted within a culture. Nevertheless, how culture is transmitted and develops will be described in the next lines. As cited in the introduction, disability was in the Middle Age perceived as representations of 'suffering Christ', which in words of Allport (1954/1979), stated that "Stereotypes are by no means always negative" (p. 191). However, using a stereotype means not to fully understand the meaning of what is being described, as stereotypes do not represent valid affirmations and are based on small and altered observations of a reality.
It is believed by the scientific community that development is tightly linked to environmental conditions. As an example, Rogoff (2003) stated that "individuals cannot be separated from the social or cultural context" (p.50), which is a pillar of the Social-Cultural-Historical theory, partly based on Vygotsky’s postulates. In addition, Ingstad and Whyte (1995) affirmed that the cultural context determine how the community perceive disability and their reaction to impairment. As a result, stereotypes and beliefs are transmitted trough culture, which is delimited by the environment.

As mentioned previously, communities are heavily influenced by culture. It has also been cited that stereotypes and beliefs changes into new ones. Rogoff (2003) stated, “Human development is a cultural process” (p.3). In addition, Rogoff (2003) also described culture as a dynamic process; thus, culture changes constantly. Nevertheless, Rogoff (1990, 1998) asserts that individuals are not just influenced by cultural processes, they also influence in the culture, participating in its development (as cited in Rogoff 2003, p.52). In conclusion, members of a community are both passive and active members in cultural changes. This fact gives hope about how to guide cultural changes towards the direction desired. In conclusion, it seems that everybody is responsible to promote inclusion, as Gandhi said, “Be the change that you wish to see in the world”.

Tylor (1874, p.27) as cited in Cole (1996), defined different levels of cultural evolution according to accomplishments in miscellaneous areas when stated that "the extent of scientific knowledge, the definitions of moral principles, the conditions of religious belief and ceremony, the degree of social and political organization". Therefore, Tylor described a person, member of a community as shaped by the environment; the person acquires knowledge, moral, beliefs, art custom and others transmitted by the culture in which he/she belongs. This point of view is shared by Bronfenbrenner (1979), who described that each person’s development is a result of the interaction between different systems in contact. Thus, a particular religion will sway the members of a community, but as has been seen, the individuals will also influence on the religion.

2.2.2 Religion, Christianity and Relevance of the Bible

Religion is indeed a sensitive topic. Moreover, its definition is also complex since it is hard to classify all different beliefs under one single term. Smith (1978) defined the term religion as:
“Throughout history and throughout the world have been able to be religious without the assistance of a special term, without the intellectual analysis that the term implies. In fact, I have come to feel that, in some ways, it is probably easier to be religious without the concept; that the notion of religion can become an enemy to piety” (p, 19).

This critical definition of religion manifests how difficult is to describe the term religion. Smith also suggested that by classifying certain customs or beliefs, it is declined the practice of the religion itself. As religion is linked with spirituality and inner beliefs, to study this term is in fact complex. Moreover, Banton (1966) referred to the areas needed to cover to understand religion when stated that:

“To understand religion, in a common-sense use of understand, [at least] both sociological and psychological explanations are required. The sociological—that is, the social anthropological-analysis alone is an explanation of the role of religion in social relations, and a psychological analysis alone is an explanation of the role of religion in the functioning of the personality” (p, 23).

Thus, religion is indeed deeply related with the constitution human relationships. It is based on the relation between individuals, as it could be explained through social relations and also through the study of personality shaped by the influence of religion.

It is believed that members of the religion in this study, as it is Christianity, accept in vast majority the Bible as the main sacred book. Raphael (2008) supported the importance of the Bible as a document source when described it as “a cultural text of singular potency in Western, and now global, civilization, the Bible has deeply informed representations, attitudes, and practices concerning disability in any given post-biblical world” (p.2). Consequently, the representations of the Bible regarding disability will be somehow connected to the practices seen nowadays.

Silverman (1997) suggested that the Bible is recognized as probably the most recurring source of literature in human history. In addition, the Bible is believed to be the most read, printed and perhaps influential literacy work in human history. It is also the main book for approximately 2.4 billion followers in the world and the prediction raise the number up to 3.3 billion, which is estimated to be 36% of earth’s population by 2050 (International Bulletin of Missionary Research, 2015). Therefore, its relevance seems unarguable and its influence covers from western countries to almost everywhere on the globe, as it was spread during the
last centuries. Furthermore, the importance of religions, is also recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (The United Nations 1948) article 18, where it is stated that:

“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance”.

This definition is nonetheless fragile as may cause confrontation with other human rights. As stated in this article 18, everyone is free to manifest their beliefs, but as has been explained, some religious beliefs lead to exclusion of people with disabilities. Nevertheless, it is not explicitly said how is limited the religious practice if anyone is harmed as a consequence of those practices. Thus, this controversy indicates the sensitivity of the topic; inclusion is the final goal to people with disabilities, but it seems that there is a conflict between rights that could prevent it to happen.

2.2.3 Disability studies

Despite the advances in science, whether branch of science, no consensus about the term disability has been agreed. The reason for this disagreement is because disability is a challenging and complicated concept that differs from setting to setting, according to diverse contexts and disciplines. Its research has also created many theories, approaches, and ideas in relation of the study of people with disabilities (WHO, 2011).

Therefore, the WHO defined disability as:

“The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) defines disability as an umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions. Disability is the interaction between individuals with a health condition (e.g. cerebral palsy, Down syndrome and depression) and personal and environmental factors (e.g. negative attitudes, inaccessible transportation and public buildings, and limited social supports).”

Hence, according to this definition, disability could not be understood without the environmental factors, more specifically concerning to this research, the “negative attitudes
& limited social supports”. Thus, in words of the WHO, if there is not interaction between health condition and personal and environmental factors, disability will not occur. Health condition can be controlled partially and improve due to nowadays medicine advances, but are the environmental factors where beliefs and connotations of disability make the disability "real". Moreover, disability might restrict some daily functions; for instance, someone who is blind cannot drive a car, but not being able to realize accomplish specific task considered as 'normal' for the mainstream do not mean a health condition.

Nevertheless, Priestley (1998a,) offered a definition of disability that relates it within the culture where it is defined. Thus, disability is defined as: “The idealist product of a society developing within a specific cultural context. The units of analysis are cultural representations” (p.81). As a conclusion, it seems not to exist yet an agreement in the scientific community about the definition of disability; this varies from one paradigm to another. For this reason, a review of the main models explaining disability will be presented next. All models will be described and criticised remarking on their similarities and differences.

2.2.4 Disability according to medical model

It was during the end of the 19th and beginning of 20th century that the medical model of disability dominated how this was understood (Midgley & Livermore, 2009). This model was also called individual model, as the problems emerged from the disability where associated to the condition of the individual. The medical model of disability is then centred on the individual, with no attribution of the disability to the context or society. Kaplan (2000) stated that in the medical model, no responsibility in the society regarding disabilities is underlined. Thus, those who are disabled, must try to adapt to the society existed, using medical resources, as treatments and rehabilitations, to help them on that mission. Consequently, the medical model target is to find a cure for disabilities, so disabled can be included in the society trough becoming "normal".

Nevertheless, the medical model perspective saw disabled as people who needed help. This interpretation of disability leaded to some misconceptions. Then, the medical model was first used by medical and psychological scientists, which classified impairments as individual medical misfortune exemplified on the individual (Shakespeare, 1993). Thus, disability was
understood as an individual’s disaster. Moreover, disability was classically included in the wider illness concept; although disability does not need to imply suffering, the medical model has traditionally seen disabled as a demander of healing and kindness, (Schumm, 2007).

Therefore, the medical model purpose is to heal the disabilities, so disabled could become normal. Kaplan (2000) argued about the reasoning in the medical model when stated, "if the individual is "cured" then these problems will not exist. Society has no underlying responsibility to make a "place" for persons with disabilities, since they live in an outsider role waiting to be cured" (p.353). Consequently, it is understood that disable must be cured if they want to be an active part of the society. This perspective rejects responsibility in the inclusion of disabled and focuses its efforts on finding ways to make disabled biologically "normal". Furthermore, the necessity of becoming "normal" is also highlighted by the definition of disability provided by the ADA (The Americans with Disabilities Act) as seen in Kaplan (2000). Then disability is defined as: "Any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being" (p.356).

Barnes and Mercer (2003) stressed the fact that the immersion of professionals in lives of disabled people when decided which type of treatment is suitable, influence in the type of life that person will have. Thus, it is understood that disabled people are in need of assistance, and pronounce the permanence of stereotypes. In addition, non-disabled professional dictates what is considered as ‘normality’ in the medical model. Consequently, prejudices and misconceptions accompanying to the term disability appear, not being classified as ‘normal’ (Barnes, Mercer & Shakespeare, 1999).

According to Dubois and Trani (2009) the major critic to the medical model is that excludes in any grade the influence of the environment. It seems that society causes a huge impact in a disability in the quality of life of disabled. When the medical model is the leading interpretation of disability, negative perception of disability are easily identified and also reinforced, presenting disabled as marginalized in the society. For this reason, as many inquiries emerged criticising this model, new interpretations of disability emerged. The main opposition to the medical model has been represented by the social model, which will be appraised next.
2.2.5 Disability according to the social model

It has been reviewed above how the medical model understands that disability could be caused by biological conditions, accidents, as a consequence of inadequate development and many others reasons. Moreover, disability is then interpreted as a problem in body function or structure. However, it was not until 1970s that disability started to be studied not just as a health or welfare issue (Oliver and Barton, 2000).

From the point of view of the social model, disability is understood in a completely different mode; Vygotsky (1993) described disability as a "social aberration", (p.66). He thinks that disability cannot be just measured by diagnosis, because he distinguishes between three types of disabilities: primary (biological impairments) secondary, (sociocultural) and tertiary (allied with higher mental functions). Measuring just biological impairments, primary disabilities, lead the exclusion of the person from the sociocultural environment, causing disabilities on the secondary level, the sociocultural. These disabilities on the second level drive the individual to an inefficient development of higher mental functions due to that lack of connection to culture as a device of human development.

Peers, parents, and teachers are considered by Vygotsky’s perspective to be responsible for the disabilities in children. For instance, two different people diagnosed with the same biological impairment, will develop differently according to the condition of each one's environment, which will lead or hinder the grade of the disability. However, in the definition of disability by WHO, it is implied a health condition. Health condition is not relevant according to the social model because it is the society the one responsible for disabilities. The social model attributes the responsibility of the disability to the society, not to biological causes.

UPIAS (Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation) defined disability under their statement of principles back in 1976, which represents the point of view offered by the social model:

“*In our view, it is the society which disables physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments, by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society. Disabled people are therefore an oppressed group in society*” (UPIAS, 1976, p3-4).
Holt (2010) described the importance of disability in a specific social system, which will construct the experiences of disability: “How powerful norms and values are embedded in everyday practices within specific social networks. These norms (re)produce the hierarchical identity positionings accorded to more or less valued bodies “ (p.26). Thus, according to Holt, disability delegates to the social context in how will be the experience of an individual, repeating similarly under the same socio-cultural context. For instance, two people within the same social context and similar grade of disability will be influenced similarly to common norms and social influence.

Another difference with the medical model is that the social model of disability argues that disability is a major human experience. This model understands disability as something that almost everyone will experience at some point and which is directly attributed to the context. Nevertheless, Dubois and Trani (2009) disagree on the perception of disability as experienced by a majority. They believe that disability caused by impairment, only affects to a small proportion of the population. In addition, Gourgey (1994) also disagrees with Vygotsky’s idea of a social responsibility in the creation of disability. He argues that nobody has a perfect body and everyone has to face some obstacles; however, this circumstance does not make a person disabled. Disability is then no relative; it is this differentiation between being physically imperfect and disability, which creates an exclusion from mainstream society.

On other critic to the social model is presented by Hughes and Paterson (1997) who claimed that denyng the existence of disability attributing it entirely to a social responsibility results in the disappearance of the body, arguing that disabilities are mostly treated by medicine. For this reason, neglecting disability is seen as an obstacle towards inclusion. This point of view is also supported by Fox and Kim (2004), “all disabilities must pass through some level of medical understanding before being more widely understood” (p.334).

In addition, one more critic to the social model is the supposition of all disabled people being oppressed and excluded. Groce (1999) argued that disabled people are not a homogeneous group; consequently, they cannot be catalogueed as a whole. Disability is therefore dependent of other environmental factors, as culture in society. Therefore, one of the main barriers towards disability is the simplification and grouping of people in a single category. As has been argued previously, the social model claimed that the medical model sort disability by classifying it into disease or illness; consequently, the social model ought not follow the same mistakes.
2.2.6 Disability according to the embodied model

As a result of all the critics surged in relation to the social model, a new embodied model of disability emerged as a consequence of it. This new model is based on the perspective shared by Hall (2000), who described the body as biological and connected with social, political and cultural standards. The embodied model considers disability as a real experienced by those with impairment, and cannot be just attributed to social responsibility. Morris (1991, p10) critics the social model saying:

“There is a tendency within the social model of disability to deny the experience of our own bodies, insisting that our physical differences and restrictions are entirely socially created. While environmental barriers and social attitudes are a crucial part of our experience of disability- and do indeed disabled us- to suggest that this is all there is to it to deny the personal experience of physical or intellectual restrictions, of illness, of the fear of dying”.

Finally, Thomas (2004) understands that both, social and medical model, must engage to each other to highlight common ground. Medical and social model need to combine to reach a better understanding of disability. All models goals should be to improve life of people with disability, towards an inclusive society.

As stated in the definition given by WHO, the influence of environmental factors will be necessary to be labelled as disabled. Thus, it seems necessary the interaction with personal and environmental factors, otherwise disability would not exist. The embodied model aims to the impaired body not to disappear. If disability is entirely attributed to social context and no to medical reasons, disability becomes invisible. On the other, if disability is just understood from the point of view of the medical model, the social context and the influence of personal and environmental factors will not be taken into consideration. These personal and environmental factors will include religious beliefs as one important pillar in most of cultures. However, needs to be clarified that in many countries, even though there are classic religious beliefs remaining in the culture, some variations had been taking place in terms of adaptation to the social and medical model. So, regardless of religious beliefs, in some contexts, social and medical model are accepted when describing the term disability. Nevertheless, in other environments, classical perception of disability is based on traditional principles, often provided by religious dogma.
2.2.7 Disability according to Christian tradition

Gorsuch and Smith (1983) suggested that God is a central component in Judeo-Christian religions. For this reason, God is responsible for all human affairs and outcomes surged in life, as stated in the next paragraph:

“A central component of most religious faiths is a God who acts in human affairs. The perception of God’s acting may largely be a function of a person’s God concept and, in the Judeo-Christian heritage, it is likely that belief in a personal God will be an essential belief component. For believers who are convinced of God’s reality and presence, attributions to divine causation for outcomes will be a central component of their interpretations of events” (p. 340).

Therefore, Gorsuch and Smith (1983) suggested that devotes delegate their life’s episodes as decided by God. The previous paragraph implies that disability would be explained according to this tradition, as an intervention of God. Webster (2007) pointed out that beliefs associated Christianity relate disability with the commitment of a sin. The original connexion between sin and disability in the Bible is shown next: The world started with Adam and Eve’s sin and from that moment suffering became a chronic human condition (Simundson, 1986).

Therefore, disability is associated with suffering in the Christian tradition. Moreover, Avalos (1995) agreed with Gorsuch and Smith (1983) when concluded that theology understands God as the only cause for disability; thus, God is the only one able to heal it. Nevertheless, Orsi (2005) suggested that being sickness a consequence of sin, the very first action to heal sickness is to admit one’s own guilt. Thus, healing is connected with sin redemption. For instance, Cusack (1997) pointed out:

"Jesus’ ability to heal is linked with his ability to forgive sins, which reinforces the notion that physical and mental wholeness was God’s original intention, and that people suffer in their bodies and minds as a result of sin” (p.414).

It has been stated how Christian beliefs relate sin with disability. However, Avalos (1995) pointed out that the reasons why God make someone disabled could be multiple. Moreover, Reinders (2011) attributed three different possibilities to the appearance of disability: First, that will be caused by blind fortune, second, it is cause by God’s punishing as a consequence of being a sinner, and three it might be God who is testing a person’s faith. Similar possibilities about how the Bible comprehend disability are given by Creamer (2008), which
described them in the next quote: “Disability is interpreted as punishment... a test of faith, an opportunity to build character or to inspire others, an occasion for the power of God to be made manifest, a sign that one lacks faith, or simply a mysterious result of God’s will” (p.50).

McCloughry and Morris (2002) also classified the possible reasons of disability in the Christian and Judaism tradition into four different categories:

1. Disability as a result of punishment, evil incarnation and disease.
2. Disability as a challenge to divine perfection.
3. Disability as an object of pity and charity.
4. Disability as incompetence and exemption from religious practice.

It seems that the reasons for disability in the Christianity progressed from a correlation between sin and disability to others. For instance, Gourgey (1994) notice a new theological vision of suffering from the Christian community, contradicting the beliefs from the Bible: this is due to "bad things happen to good people" (p.75). From this theology perspective God is unable to help people who suffer, that is why they do. Thus, God’s power is limited; God will show sympathy for our suffering but will be powerless to help. This perspective contradicts the statement first reviewed in which God was responsible for human affairs.

It has been described how suffering is a consequence of being disabled in the Christianity. Moreover, this relationship is widely accepted still nowadays (French and Swain, 2004). This standpoint presents resistance to disappear, and contrary to what is expected, tends to be spread throughout time. This misconception is broadly shared by a broad part of the society, internalised and accepted, promoting exclusive attitudes (Kitchin, 1998). Surprisingly, there is a relationship with the traditional Christian view of disability and the existing in the medical model. As Mitra (2006) suggests that treatments and medical care are provided to minimize ‘suffering’ and bring back the disabled to the ‘norm’. In both cases, disability is also centred in the individual.

Finally, it has also been explained how traditional beliefs in Christianity connect disability with sin commitment. However, Webster (2007) condemned the practice of Christianity in relating disability with sin, even tough there is not direct link connecting both terms. For this reason, Eiesland (1994) and Webster (2007) predicted the necessity of the Christianity to renew symbols and practices in order to become inclusive.
2.2.8 Key words for research

It has been reviewed above how diverse models aimed to describe disability interpreting it from perspectives in conflict. Even if the social model denies the existence of disability, attributing it to something constructed by the society, the fact is that there are words in any language that described impairments associating these words to certain limitation in body function or organs. A briefly description of the words used to collect data seem necessary to address the topic of study with enough knowledge. It is the aim of the study to describe how disability is labelled in the Bible; as mentioned previously, biblical text attribute connotations to disability, which will be identified trough searching for these key words. Disability is called by different names on the Bible; however, some of the most common impairments illustrated on its passages are the terms blind, deaf, lame and mute. These will be defined in the next paragraphs:

**Blind**: For the definition of this term, blindness will be defined instead. Thus, blindness is understood as the fact of being blind. "Blindness is a severe vision impairment, not correctable by standard glasses, contact lenses, medicine, or surgery. It interferes with a person's ability to perform everyday activities" (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011).

**Deaf**: WHO defined deafness, as “Hearing impaired people can be hard of hearing or deaf. If a person cannot hear at all, then they have deafness". WHO also pointed out possible causes for deafness as: "inherited, caused by maternal rubella or complications at birth, certain infectious diseases such as meningitis, use of ototoxic drugs, exposure to excessive noise and ageing".

**Lame**: This term refers to be "(of a person or animal) unable to walk without difficulty as the result of an injury or illness affecting the leg or foot". (Of a leg or foot) affected by injury or illness". "Disabled so that movement, especially walking, is difficult or impossible" (Oxford dictionaries).

**Mute**: "Refraining from producing speech or vocal sound" or "unable to speak".

Nowadays, the terms "mute" and "deaf" to qualify people who are unable to speak are considered objectionable. However, "blind" is commonly used to describe people with a visual impairment. Finally, "lame" is vaguely used at all in any context (Oxford dictionaries).
2.2.9 Stereotypes

It has been referred how the words "mute" "deaf" are considered objectionable. This unpleasant use of these words emerged as a reaction of the stereotypes connected to them. As Watson (1997) suggested, the meaning of words varies due to the use given by the members of a society.

Stereotype is defined as "A widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing" (Oxford dictionaries). Moreover, according to Allport (1954/1979) the stereotype "function is to (rationalize) our conduct in relation to that category" (p.191). Nevertheless, it is not the aim of this paper to deeply argue about the definition and origin of stereotype, but rather offer an awareness of the concept, as it is a major consequence emerged from the beliefs towards disability. Thus, for this research the connection between a word and the stereotype will be profitable as will lead to the information needed for the analysis.

Nevertheless, the association between one word and the connotations derived from it, which are mostly negative, are commonly shared by a culture. Words used to describe a type of impairment have negative connotations as studied by Oliver (1996), who suggests that simple and negative conceptualizations reaffirm the negative sense of disability as a negative concept. Thus, words describing different types of impairments are usually attributed negative implications, using simplistic connections and reasoning.

2.2.10 Inclusion and inclusive education

Inclusion has been presented previously as the final goal towards people with disabilities, as they are often left apart. Moreover, inclusion is a term used in varied areas, one of the most relevant, is the inclusion in an educational setting. Thus, UNESCO (2009) presented the following definition of inclusive education:

"Inclusive education is a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners ... As an overall principle, it should guide all education policies and practices, starting from the fact that education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just and equal society" (p.8).
UNESCO stated this definition of inclusion focusing in educational scenery. However, it seems reasonable that to achieve inclusion in a particular setting of a society, it also has to be promoted in all the other areas of the society, as inclusion is not something that can be achieved "partially". Consequently, to promote inclusion some barriers must be overthrown. Nevertheless, as we have seen, some circumstances might promote or prevent this change. Thus, religion being one of the most influential parts in a culture, and consequently society, performs a big effect on their member’s attitudes.

Goodley (2011) stated that on doing research with people with disabilities, it is necessary to report socioeconomic, cultural, socio-spatial, and political factors conditioning the exclusion of individuals with disabilities. Goodley suggested the importance of the social context. As mentioned before, context offers a major influence on a person with disability; these effects will be reflected on that person, quality of life, self-esteem and inclusion in the belonged culture.

The influence of the social group is also remarked by Swain and French (2000), they stated “Disability is not caused by impairment... but the oppression of people with impairments in a disabiling society” (p.571). This perspective agrees with the point of view of the social model seen previously. Moreover, Allport (1954/1979) reported "so heavily is the prevailing cultural pressure that members of minority groups sometimes look at themselves trough the same lens as other groups" (p. 198). Thus, not only the society performs a huge influence in people with disabilities; in some cases those will accept stereotypes and prejudices as theirs. Furthermore, Lamé, Peters, Vlaeyen, Kleef, and Patijn (2005) found out that for people with chronic pain, beliefs make the pain more intense and harder to find relief. Thus, the use of derogatory terms or stereotypes when describing a person with a physical impairment, will blocks the promotion of a better self-stee and alleviation of pain.

One of the main references for inclusion in the Special Needs field is the Salamanca Statement from 1994. However, the Salamanca Statement seems to be more a declaration of intentions, focused on the goals to reach inclusion rather than plan designed to reach it. It is detailed in the Salamanca Statement how in some developing countries as low as only 1% of children with disability has access to an education. Moreover, the Salamanca Statement (1994) declares “The reform of social institutions is not only a technical task; it depends, above all, upon the conviction, commitment and good will of the individuals who constitute society." (p. 11).
As Lindsay (2003) stated, Inclusive Education is nowadays the best option known to remove barriers and the most accepted tendency related with the education of pupils with special needs. This has been supported by international declarations, such as Salamanca Statement (1994), which have been assigned by the most of the countries that agreed with its implantation (Kokkala, 2006). However, this establishment has not been completed in the practice and controversy appears due to its low effectiveness, (Savolainen, 2006). This ineffectiveness may be a result of the Salamanca statement just a being a declaration of intentions, but with no sanctions or other consequences attached to its breach.

The Salamanca Statement suggested that the source preventing inclusion of children with disabilities is the society itself. Thus, the roots of exclusion are into "the individuals who constitute society". This affirmation corresponds to the viewpoint of the social model and the responsibility of the society concerning disability.

Finally, religion has been, since the first human beings, an important source of influence in many aspects of life. As it has been stated, still nowadays religion influences communities through the world and is an important piece for most of the cultures. Even if some communities understand that disabilities are caused by reasons that can be proved scientifically, in certain context it is still explained by traditional religious beliefs. Therefore, it seems to be a confrontation between traditional beliefs and the goal of inclusion in certain contexts.

2.3 Summary

This chapter has sought to outline the conceptual and theoretical frame of this thesis. The term "disability" has been described and approached from the available models, focusing on their particularities and similarities. It has also been described the traditional Christian perspective of disability and beliefs connected to it. In addition, it was briefly described the meaning of the words used to identify disability in the Bible, as will be used during the analysis. Stereotypes were also briefly examined and followed by the definition of the term inclusion and policies related. Furthermore, as an educator, inclusive education and the obstacles to reach it were indeed essential to discuss. Finally, the research methods followed to address the research question will be detailed during the next chapter.
Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to illustrate how this research was carried, aiming to provide answers to the research questions. This study was designed to investigate the phenomenon of disability and its connotations in religious literature, concretely in the Bible. Thus, according to the nature of the research questions, it has been designed a method of analysis that fits the needs of the research. The method used for data selection is document analysis. The data has been analysed using thematic analysis, a flexible and inductive way of data analysis. However, document analysis has been criticized for being a non-transparent method in terms of data analysis and results emerged (Bowen, 2009). Hence, I am aware that credibility and reliability of this research could be affected by the method chosen; for this reason, it is the aim of this chapter to describe and explain the steps followed during the design of the study. This chapter will start outlining the methodology of the research, describing the reasons why document analysis was chosen for this research and the characteristics of this method. Afterwards, it will be presented how data was processed and analysed. At the end of this chapter, will be criticized the validity, reliability, limitations and ethical considerations concerning the study.

3.2 Methods

This master thesis has the intention of describing beliefs and attitudes towards disability as represented in the Bible. However, to choose the adequate research method for this purpose, a paradigm must be selected. Kuhn (1970, as cited in Chalmers, 1999) pointed out "Much of modern sociology lacks a paradigm and consequently fails to qualify as science" (p.109). Furthermore, Kuhn (1970, as cited in Chalmers, 1999), compared paradigm, known as the theoretical frame in which experiments take place in a scientific field, as "the rules of a game". To chose a paradigm is a need in the scientific community, to base research under a common understanding. It is for this reason that research might be carried following a scientific method, so its results would be accepted for the scientific community.

According to Neuman (2011) the philosophical assumptions behind the research
methodology are conditioned by epistemological and ontological orientations. Epistemology is portrayed as the theory of generating knowledge. For this research, the epistemological approach is clearly interpretative; thus, interpretation is necessary to understand the object of study. Bryman (2008) described interpretative approach as based on questions rather than hypotheses. On the other hand, ontology means how reality is understood. According to this thesis, it will be based on constructivism, due to the existence of multiple realities built by different contexts (Bryman, 2008).

Research is divided into two different main approaches, which are qualitative and quantitative research; those are different on the manner they explore the reality. Qualitative research offers an in-depth exploration of the reality while quantitative solves hypotheses by using mathematics (Newman, 2011). This study is an inductive qualitative research and the purpose of this analysis is to describe the roots of a social reality by studying the religious literature; these manuscripts might offer the theoretical frame for the beliefs in a social reality. Nevertheless, one of the intentions of the methodology in this study is to create a barrier between the researcher and the object of study. The object of study has influenced me through the cultural influence while I was being raised; this might be interpreted as advantages or disadvantages, which will be discussed later.

3.3 Research design

This research has been conducted from a problem-driven starting point. Interpretations of religious texts have lead to diverse actions and attitudes towards disability. According to Krippendorff (2013), a problem-driven document analysis is originated by a current phenomena, in which texts are used to provide answers.

Hence, it is known the source of these texts but exist an ambiguous relationship between disability and religious beliefs, as was commented in the previous chapter. However, beliefs might lead to attitudes towards disabled, based on the religious literature feeding those beliefs. It is for this reason that to be able to answer the research question of this study, it is necessary to interpret religious literature. As a conclusion, the documents will be analysed to understand issues in the 'real world' that are connected with the literature under study.
3.4 Data Collection/Procedures

This research project has used the Bible as the only primary source of data. Using documents or texts as sources for research has received the name of document analysis, also called content analysis.

Schreier (2012) describes QCA (Qualitative Content Analyses) as "a method for systematically describing the meaning of qualitative material. It is done by classifying material as instances of the categories of a coding frame" (p.1). Paradoxically, Kuckartz (2014) pointed out that some of the first studies using document analysis were to interpret the Bible back in the 17th century.

Atkinson and Coffey (2004) stated that documents should be analyzed in terms of the context where they were shaped and with the recipients. Thus, even if the reliability of the study in documents prevents the "real interaction in a real setting", when analyzing the Bible will be noticed the intention of the manuscript within its readers. Moreover, Bryman (2008) corresponds to this statement when alleged "documents are significant for what they were supposed to accomplish and who they are written for" (p.527). In addition, Atkinson and Coffey (2004) define documents as representations of 'social facts' because of the context in which are produced, spread and used. Thus, it is believed that The Bible was written to divulge its 'message' to the followers of the religion. For this reason, it is expected to describe the desirable behavior from devotes.

For this study, a hermeneutical approach was taken in analyzing the Bible. Hermeneutics is defined as the science to interpret, or the methods existing in analyzing documents (Kuckartz, 2014). The reason is that without understanding a text it will be just a group of characters and words with no meaning. In a qualitative approach interpretation is needed to understand the data. Hence, the manner information is interpreted will lead to a type of understanding.

The Bible is often analysed from a theological perspective. As I have personally read during the groundwork of this thesis, some explanations given by theologians about the relationship between God and disability are extremely complex, abstract and hardly linked with a paragraph or verse from the Bible. Thus, during the Mass, Christians often listen to verses from the Bible, which are read literally, with no deep explanations, as I experienced many times. For this reason, I believe there is a need of understanding the biblical texts as written, trying to avoid vague or too deep interpretations far beyond the text.
There is indeed a necessity to follow some rules while analyzing documents, aiming to reach a correct interpretation of the text connection with 'the real world'. For this reason, Kuckartz (2014) defined five stages in qualitative content analysis, which were used in this research. The first one is for the researcher to reflect on the personal preconceptions about the topic. Secondly, work with a text as a whole. On third place, the researcher must be aware of hermeneutic differentiations; the text will be only understood through interpretations. The forth step is to pay attention to the appearance of topics and themes in the text. The last rule is for the investigator to differentiate between discovery and use of codes and coding. All these five rules were applied while the analysis was carried out.

### 3.4.1 Reasons for choice of method

As the main focus of the study is to describe how disability is represented in the Bible, the text contained on it will be the only source of data. The Bible exists long before this research was design, it is an original document and has not gone through any interpretation, rather than translations to different languages; consequently, it is a primary source of data. Using a primary source of data is essential for an exploratory study, as this aims to be. Creswell (2014) stated "One of the chief reasons for conducting a qualitative study is that the study is exploratory" (p.33). In addition, Rapley (2007) described document analysis as an exploratory study of what it is said but also what is omitted.

Nevertheless, even if the Bible is a primary source of data, it has been multiple times focus of studies. However, this study will be unique because as Richards (2009) stated "the researcher is still selecting what will be treated as data" (p.47). There have been many previous studies about the topic, but this study aims to offer a new perspective of disability in the Bible, using document analysis as a research method, which is a relatively a new method, even tough has been use with anteriority to study the Bible.

Two other reasons for conducting a research based on document analysis were described by Denscombe (2007), which are the easy accesses to documentary sources and are cost-effective. These positive features are recognized by Bowen (2009), who added to the efficiency of this method, not having to collect data from scratch, because the data is already 'there'. In addition, documents represent a stable and broad source of data.
On the other hand, Bowen (2009) pointed out some limitations with document analysis as a method. One of the limitations is that documents were made with other intentions rather than their study. In this case, I consider this an advantage because the intention of the document is to offer a representation of a social issues and religious dogmas through literature. In addition, Bowen also remarked irretrievability as a limitation, which in this situation is definitely not the case as the Bible is the most available document that exists.

In case of this study, there were necessary just a computer and Internet access to collect the data. Hence, development of technology made this research much faster and efficient than ever before. On first place, the research was planned to be carried differently, through interviews to collect data. However, difficulties to access data, and religion being a highly sensitive topic, made me eventually chose document analysis, where distance with the reality could have some advantages and limitations.

I believe that the Bible was written to share "the word of God to everyone". For this reason, I also believe that abstract and complex interpretations are not part of the original intentions of its writings, as those were found during the early familiarization with the topic. Moreover, I totally agree with Watson (1997), who stated that the aim of textual analysis is “to treat language as a kind of transparent ‘window to the world’, as a conduit, a direct channel to some ‘real thing’ in the social world” (p.81). Thus, the Bible will contain social representations of disability, which in my opinion should be interpreted in a simple and direct manner, as it contains the message to the reader or listener of the Holy Book.

3.4.2 The Bible as a source of data

It is been already said that the Bible will be the only primary source of data in this study. In words of Bryman (2008) “The term “documents” covers a very wide range of different kinds of source” (p.515). In addition, he also mentioned documents as produced in large amounts from diverse organizations. Watson (as cited in Silverman, 1997) added the importance of documents as a valuable source of information; moreover, texts can be found in any form of written language.

As mentioned before, the Bible is the most read and analyzed document; its relevance is enormous, which remarks the necessity of this research in the study of the field. Richards
(2009) supported the use of documents in research when stated:

"Increasingly, qualitative research uses data from sources other than direct encounters with people. Some studies require only such data and almost all could use some such data. For many projects, the data exist before the project is proposed. Working selectively with archival sources of data is a very different task from selecting what will be recorded in the field. But the researcher is still selecting what will be treated as data" (p.47).

This paragraph from Richards suits perfectly the procedures in this research. As was described with anteriority, religion and disability are extremely sensitive topic, even more if combined. For this reason, after the reformulation of the thesis, was decided to work only with texts. In this particular case, the data has existed for many centuries, being accessible to all researchers. However, one of the determinant parts to decide analyzing the Bible came on the way nowadays could be done. Finally, one of the most crucial advantages of this research is the fact that we are able to look for concrete passages throughout the Bible, and the malleability of the data.

Documents are used as a platform to understand social organization, as Coffey (2014) stated, “Documents provide a mechanism and vehicle for understanding and making sense of social and organization practices” (p. 367). Moreover, Atkinson & Coffey (2004) stated that all texts are produced based on some values and viewpoints. Finally, they also remarked that someone writes texts to an addressee. Thus, documents are 'recipient designed', and for this reasons contain assumptions about the identity of the reader. Atkinson & Coffey (2004) suggested that in texts where the author is not identified, there is a tendency of building authoritative accounts; this would imply the presence of a reality independent of people. Moreover, they also detailed the often use of documents recreating a predictable and uniform representation of social arrangements, far from the large variety of social events. As a conclusion, the Bible was designed for the followers of that religion to be read and to lecture its lines.

Duriau, Reger & Pfarrer (2007), agreed with Coffey describing the advantages of content analysis as a method. They believed in document analysis as a rigorous form of investigation to assess important but challenging issues; such research can be used in areas as organizational behaviour and social issues. Subsequently, as this research posses those characteristics, content analysis is the best suitable method of analysis. Producing a
manuscript, as in social interaction, social actors control and form their actions, fitting the reader’s responses and evaluations. While writing manuscripts, the author has the chance of building up a version of the truth throughout consistency in the values reflected on the text (Gomm, 2004).

3.4.3 Sampling

In qualitative document analysis is the researcher’s task to produce data. This must be found, collected, ordered and selected for its analysis. The relevance of the data is directly related with its capacity to answer the research questions. For this research, the Bible will provide the data to solve the research problem; this is due to the nature of the research questions, which involves directly to the Bible.

The Bible is a large document for its analysis; even tough, it is the only document to analyze. Thus, for this research, what considered as data had to be delimited to the parts related with the topic of study. It has been explained how texts are used to study some 'real fact'; this fact is located beyond the text, but represented on it. Document analysis is about understanding and interpreting the text as a whole, not just its parts; without interpretation it would be just characters and words. However, those words that compose a text have a 'meaning' by themselves. This meaning is understood and shared by the readers. These words will lead to the topic that is of interest by connecting their meaning to the rest of the text. For instance, the word 'blind' is used to describe someone 'who is unable to see'. Blind’s definition could vary from one source to another, but in fact does not have a complete meaning without a context. To deeply understand the meaning of blind we must search on what the concept awakes in the society. For the sampling of this thesis, there have been four words searched throughout the Bible, defining four types of disability from where the context could be interpreted and studied: those words are *blind*, *deaf*, *mute* and *lame*.

3.5 Data Analysis

During the presentation of the data analysis, steps and procedures followed will be next explained on detailed. Therefore, by identifying parts of the Bible of special relevance for this study and trough analyzing them, will lead to answers for the research problem.
However, there are some disagreement on selective reading of the Bible; as Raphael (2008) stated, “Selective readings, in either direction, depend on isolating the passages, and thus isolating biblical disability, just as social practices isolate disabled persons” (p.2). I am aware that omitting parts of the text will not lead to the same accuracy as researching all passages. Nevertheless, I do not agree with this perspective, as this selective reading is carried to understand the Bible as a whole. As Wodak (2011) pointed out “the concept of the hermeneutic circle is relevant for the interpretation of textual meanings: the meaning of a part can only be understood in the context of the whole; however, the meaning of the whole is only accessible via its parts” (p.624). Accordingly, it is necessary to isolate parts and analyzed their meaning to acquire a broader meaning.

This is the first time I have done any type of research, and thematic analysis seemed to be the right method of choice to figure out analysis, according to Braun & Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis is a slightly organized and hermeneutic method of analysis for classifying, examining and reporting themes and patterns in empirical data. Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid, & Redwood (2013) described thematic analysis as the method used to: “…identify commonalities and differences in qualitative data, before focusing on relationships between different parts of the data, thereby seeking to draw descriptive and/or explanatory conclusions clustered around themes” (p.2).

The method of thematic analysis has the advantages of being accessible and flexible while analyzing data. According to Schreier (2012), thematic analysis or coding is an analytic method centered on how groups relate between them; in fact, it is also considered the most notorious method of analysis. Furthermore, Braun & Clarke (2006) proposed thematic analysis as the foundation method for qualitative data analysis.

This research has its focus on the meaning of text, observing direct and implied meanings. Therefore, it has been avoided complex interpretations or complicated structures supporting meanings, as it is one of the targets of this study to interpret data in a different manner theologies do. However, this qualitative study is about interpretation, and to define how deep the interpretation is carried can be only justify following a define research method. During the following sections, it will be described the stages tracked during analysis, starting with thematic reading of documents. Next, it will be summarized the data collected labeling what is considered relevant or non-relevant for the study. Finally, will be conducted the analysis using the method of thematic analysis.
3.5.1 Thematic reading

The first step trailed for the thematic reading was to find an online version of the Bible. There were many Bibles on Internet but there was one named 'http://www.biblestudytools.com/' that came on handy because it has a searcher on it, which would make the study extremely easier than without this tool. The version of the Bible for this research is the English Standard Version (ESV). This choice is due to after reading some newer versions, it was noticed that the newer ones tend to use terms as "visually impaired" and other terminology "adapted" not to sound objectionable. It is not the aim of this thesis to evaluate the meaning of the word used nowadays or their politically correct use; for this reason a version of the Bible containing the key words for selecting the data was chosen.

By finding the terms, 'blind' 'deaf' 'lame' and 'mute' the searcher listed the results by order of appearance in the bible. These results would show the verses in which any of those words appears, the chapter and book it belongs to, as well as the option of access the context in which is embedded. Thus, in case of the meaning in a sentence was not understood, it could be studied a broader context once the verse is located.

Once the data is collected for the study, the next step to follow is what Braun & Clarke (2006) called "familiarizing yourself with your data" (p.87). Therefore, trough reading the data, notes were taken directing data to the research question/sub questions that would be more related to. In addition, some themes emerged that had not been though previously, creating new themes. Throughout this first readings memos were also written. They contained notes; sometimes explanatory or ideas emerged during the reading. When those memos were repeated or seemed to be highly close to others, were put into blocks, as suggested by Kuckartz (2014).

The first stage of reading is to understand the content and to classify data into themes and concepts; as a result, some topics emerged:

- Description of disability
- Origin of disability
- Sin, guilt and disability
- Healing disability
3.5.2 Summarizing and selecting

After the thematic reading and becoming familiar with the data, this data was processed, which means classified into relevant/irrelevant and summarized. As the first method to identify relevant data was through the use of key words, all data collected was considered at first relevant. However, some parts of the text were classified of special interest, providing new ideas, knowledge or contradicting previous ones. Subsequently, the data collected had some parts more relevant for the study than others. This was decided by the capacity of the data to fit into the research question, as Schreier (2012) suggested.

To do this summary, each part of the document was put into different themes, according to the message of the text. Case summaries were written classifying the data into those themes, which were related with the research question and sub questions (Kuckartz, 2014). As the reading was going further, new points of view emerged from the same topic; thus, this relationship was outlined, also when a common perspective was shared in different passages of the Bible.

Nevertheless, one of the major risks while selecting and summarizing data is that this process corresponds only to the researcher choice. Schreier (2012) pointed out that to avoid bias while filtering the material, the use of a coding frame presents an optimal solution. Thus, the coding frame divided data into two categories, relevant and irrelevant. However, the irrelevant information was not completely discarded, as could be transformed into relevant material as the research advanced.
3.5.3 Thematic analysis

This phase corresponds with the structured analysis of the empirical data. The previous steps helped to become familiar with the data, but this step was nonetheless difficult to achieve. The material collected contained a large amount of information. It was analyzed using coding, as the data was ordered into categories and carried a trial analysis. However, coding is decided by the researcher, it would vary from different studies and it is rather dependent of an interpretative ability, reason why it will be described further.

The coding test was very large and contained several subdivisions. These divisions were formed to classify and structure information emerged from data. The subcategories enclosed data with common characteristics, as Krippendorff (2013) explained.

Classification into categories was carried out using a mixture of methods for building categories. A deductive strategy was followed, considering the work from previous studies (Schreier, 2012). Nevertheless, the research questions also decided how to classify into categories by how content correlated to them. Furthermore, the content of the material emerged during the previous phases of the study were also determinant in the manner of classifying. Thus main categories within some aspect of the study contained several subcategories with more detailed aspects. These subcategories were designed through a data-driven strategy; this was a result of the problem-focused nature of the research. Braun & Clarke (2006) suggested that in qualitative research subcategories might be decided based on the emerged empirical data. Kuckartz (2014) emphasized that categories develop from paraphrasing, generalizing and abstracting from the original data, using subsumption; hence, categories are formed through working with the data, they will receive the concepts emerging or will create new categories if those do not fill in any (Schreier, 2012).

The main categories were designed using the form of the research question and sub questions. Subsumption seemed an adequate started point to build new categories. This strategy was repeated until I reached the point of saturation, which means that from the data available did not emerge any new category or concept (Schreier, 2012).

The next phase was to form a pilot-coding frame to classify the material into the diverse categories. Then, those categories were defined describing simple definitions for each one, making clear what type of content would be in every group. The aim of this phase was to create consistency in the classification and not to commit mistakes when dividing into
groups. To prove this consistency the trial coding was used, meanwhile searching for patterns and connections. Those patterns would help to delimit the coding frame into a more detailed structure. This action supported the formation of strong categories and the significance of every one.

The coding frame was several times redefined before I went forward to the next stage of the analysis. Using notes and memos written with anteriority supported a broader view when it was needed to appeal to the Bible as a whole and single document. The final coding frame leaded into a coding sheet, used to empower comparison between different parts of the text, also to differentiate between categories.

3.6 Challenges with Analysis

During the analysis, some parts were easier than expected, and the opposite happened with others. For instance, collecting data was extremely easy, as I noticed how helpful were the resources available nowadays, Internet and computers. Thus, to reproduce the same study some years ago, would have been necessary large amounts of time, which would have turn around the little time consuming on collecting data, into an excessive time.

One of the major challenges appeared while classifying data into categories. Some of the data could fit into several categories; however, other did not suit into any or its meaning was unclear. In addition, the coding frame had to be reviewed many times, emerging at some point contradictions between categories, which had to be solved by reviewing the coding frame again. This research has been the first one I have ever been involved, so every step was challenging, venturing into an unknown area. The positive aspect was that by following tightly the steps designed, it was made easy to go backwards to fix the issues arisen in the analysis.

Finally, interpreting in the analysis was sometimes very challenging due to the use of language, as it was not clear the meaning to me. Thus, in some cases I had to draw on a broader context to understand meaning, but also being aware of not missing the focus of the topic as the context became wider.
3.7 Validity and Reliability

The importance of validity and reliability was stated by Bryman (2008), who pointed out that social research is evaluated in terms of validity and reliability. Consequently, the researcher is responsible for controlling the validity and reliability. Hence, Bryman (2008) also pointed out that "whether you are observing, identifying or "measuring" what you say you are" (p.376).

Document analysis has been criticized for the lack of reactive effect. Atkinson and Coffey (2004) noticed the limitation of the validity in this method. They pointed out the ontological status of documents as they form a separate reality. The reality shown by documents cannot be taken as a representation of the social reality. On the other hand, this contradicts what was presented at the beginning of the chapter where documents were presented as 'windows to study a reality'. Moreover, Bryman (2008) stated that reliability “refers to the consistency of a measure of a concept” (p.149). In the case of this study, texts are already an available source of data, so the scholar does not influence on them. Silverman (2006) supported the idea of text as an object source of data “For this reason, textual data are, in principle, more reliable than observation” (p.285). In addition, one other advantage of using textual documents is that they are described as non-reactive. Bryman (2008) pointed out that they “have not been produced specifically for the purposes of social research” (p.515).

Nevertheless, I believe that documents do not represent exactly a social reality, but it is a reflexion of it. For instance, the Bible would represent the social reality at the time it was written, which could not be compared with nowadays society, but could help to understand the roots of the beliefs towards disability and their evolution.

The reason for this study is that historically the Bible has been studied with different purposes, which leads to different expected results based on the method chosen. Wodak (2011) criticized some hermeneutic approaches when are used to analyze the Bible. Those approaches stressed ways to reach the 'exclusive' meaning of text, particularly when confronting religious or sacred beliefs. To follow a new path, based on a simpler analysis of the Bible is one of the main targets of this research, as it was discussed during the election of the method.

Validity is the main issue in research methodology (Maxwell, 1992). From a quantitative position, as Kuhn stated above, qualitative methods are not accurate in giving valid results.
However, Mishler (1990, as cited in Maxwell, 1992) focused the validity in the meaning and interpretation of the results, arguing that following procedures do not necessary lead to valid assessments. More recently, Creswell (2014) has stated that a qualitative study is based on interpretation. The validity depends of the investigator’s criteria. Moreover, according to Maxwell (1992), there is not just one objective account; it is relative of the intentions of the research. Therefore, the validity cannot be tested by the method itself, it might vary according to the context, intentions and what will be done with the data collected. Validity is relative because it depends of the understanding and interpretation of the researcher, which are unique for each researcher. This interpretation does not mean complete freedom for the researcher; there is a need from the investigator of adaptation and understanding. That is the case of a study based in a community with different values and culture than the researcher’s. Henwood and Pidgeon (1993, as cited in Fay, 1996) stated "social researchers should developed an appreciation of others beliefs and values" (p, 261). In case of this research, as I have already said, there has been a direct contact with the religion of study, which makes me familiar with the topic.

Tadmor (2010) described a major threat to validity while studying the Bible. She argued that meanings in the Bible, even tough the text is static and does not change trough times, could be challenged. She described how translating the Bible from Hebrew to different languages, including English might lead to misinterpretations. In addition, Tadmor (2010) also mentioned that some Hebrew words do not correspond to any English term, even in some cases, the translation of a term in Hebrew adds an opposite meaning than the English word used to translate the term; since the Bible is a sacred text, no review of the translations placed centuries ago has been done since then. Nevertheless, the aim of this study is to describe the Bible´s verses, as it is transcript to English or any other language, using key words to identify the pieces of study but with the support of the context. In this case misinterpretations of certain words do not seem to be a threat to validity because such misconceptions happened seldom in a specific set of words.

3.8 Limitations with the study

During the introduction of this study was exposed how religious beliefs were transmitted trough culture and based on the literature review. Culture changes constantly which makes
the study of a far past, difficult to achieve. However, literature seem to be an ideal tool to study the past, as has not changed much and just adapted to new uses of language or versions with new times. The researcher can control those changes by using one of the first versions of the Bible, which in this case is not practical because the language used back then is far different as it is nowadays and so the understanding of the text would be at risk. It is in fact the use of key words one of the main limitations of the study by focusing only in certain terms used to name a disability, but avoiding the 'big picture' of how disability is described in The Bible. By extracting data only from the words chosen to find the relevant information, it is being missed situations where disability is referred but not with the terms selected. On the other hand, the use of key words allowed to a classification of disabilities and to follow patterns in the description.

One of the limitations of this study could also be the use of only documents to investigate the topic. What is written in the Bible does not mean, as was discussed, that represents a direct reflection of the society of the time. Nevertheless, for obvious reasons cannot be carried any direct contact with participants of that society. The Bible is a common source of literature to the followers of Christianity, but personal interpretations, individual principals and other will determine their attitudes towards disability.

It is recommended by many researchers the use of different types of data collection to strength validity and reliability in research (Creswell, 2014). As there is only one method of analysis, in this case just documents, triangulation of methods to define common results is not unlikely. Bryman (2008) also support the idea of the combination of qualitative and quantitative research as the desirable way in doing research. However, as the aim of this research is to reach the source of religious relationship within disability and not personal experiences or opinions based on those scriptures, the only use of document analysis to obtain data is not a limitation, if not a part of the design. Then, I am aware that the research could have different results if participants would be part in the study, but it would have been a different type of research.

One of the main limitations of this research lingers with the capacity of the researcher to carry the study. As this is the first research I have ever done, one of the main weaknesses is the inexperience in doing investigation. I was also unfamiliar with the research method, but not so with reading the Bible. However, the previous contact I had with the Bible had been at the school and with a type of reading oriented to the instruction of the catholic doctrine.
3.9 Ethical considerations

One of the main reasons for choosing this research method was sensitivity. The analysis of documents confronts less ethical issues than direct intervention with participants, or merely observation (Esterberg, 2002). In doing research with documents and analysing them through a qualitative perspective, the main challenge regarding ethics is the subjectivity. Qualitative research is about interpretation, but does not mean that the researcher is free to interpret it without following some rules. According to Atkinson & Coffey (2004) “Reading is an activity, not the passive receipt of information” (p, 72). Even if a research does not involve participants, subjectivity keeps being a major ethical treat. It is responsibility of the researcher to understand the cultural setting being under investigation. However, as a qualitative research method, it is impossible to be completely objective because the analysis is under the researcher interpretation. What it is indeed obligation of the researcher is to be aware of this issue and use systems of measurements to avoid bias in the most possible way. It is this reflective capacity of the researcher and self-evaluation the best possible method to be ethically correct. A systematic research system will be the best available tool to prevent subjectivity and to follow the scientific path.

3.10 Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to describe the research methodology chosen for this research, explaining the methods available and the one chosen for this thesis. It is been also described the process of analysis that will take place on the next chapter; concretely, the procedure used in collecting and analysing of the data. Moreover, threats and advantages of the method chosen have been argued, with special consideration of validity and reliability. At the end, ethical considerations to be aware during this research have been reflected and will be followed in the next chapters.

Finally, the aim of this chapter is to provide with enough instructions about the process of analysis. This is done to permit the reproduction of this research in other studies or to use it to support new ones within the topic.
Chapter 4. Analysis and discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the empirical material obtained from the study of the Bible. Thus, the data will be presented and examined in order to answer the research question and sub questions, which are:

*How is disability described in The Bible?*

*What is the origin of disability?*

*How are the attitudes towards disability?*

As Bui (2009) suggested, there are two systems to account findings from narrative data. The first mode is to group findings around main themes or patterns emerged during the analysis. The other way is to organize the findings towards the research questions. Consequently, for this research, the data analyzed will be grouped into themes that emerged during analysis, providing in this style response for the research questions. The reason of choice of this method is that grouping into themes fitted naturally as the analysis was being made. Hence, the analysis of the data has derived into diverse themes that will permit to approach the research problem accurately. First, it will be explained the concept of disability in the Bible followed by its origin. Moreover, what healing of people with disabilities means and how is resolved. Afterwards, it will take place the analysis of attitudes towards disabled. Finally, the last theme will enclose the connotations of disability and their use in the language.

Before starting to present and discuss my findings, I believe it is important to disclose my position within the topic of disability in the Bible. I have usually assumed that rigid statements of any type, whether religious or not, limits our capacity of progression as human beings if are not questioned. Nevertheless, I understand that religious dogmas, as those presented in the Bible, are followed and emerge an influence in the life of millions of people. However, I consider important to acknowledge that some dogmas might have a negative impact in those under their influence, perpetuating stigmas and accompanying social exclusion.
4.2 Concept of disability in the Bible

It is the purpose of this subsection to describe disability as stated in the Bible; therefore, first must be said that logically there is not a single definition of it; as has been presented in chapter two, disability is a difficult and abstract concept to define, and one of the main reasons for this study. However, through copying and interpreting information provided by the text, an overview of the term disability will be formed.

It has been explained during the literature review how disability could be interpreted from diverse perspectives representing diverse paradigms. For this analysis, disability was identified through the use of certain words, as was mentioned during the methodology chapter. Therefore, the four different words use to identify disability refers to different types of impairments but typically grouped together, as those disabilities have properties or characteristics in common. An example of how terms that relate to disabilities are congregated together is found in the next verse:

"In these lay a multitude of invalids--blind, lame, and paralyzed" (John 5:3)

As has been seen in the quote above, blind and lame are associated to the same category that corresponds to paralyzed and subordinate to invalids. In addition, the verse also describes disabled as gathering together, as it is implied that not randomly lay at the same place. This classification is similar as the one provided in the medical model, which tends to classify disability by characteristics of the impairment. According to Dubois and Trani (2009) and Groce (1999), the medical model uses classification of impairments by types of dysfunctions; these are for instance ‘blind’, ‘deaf’ or ‘paralyzed’. This classification is not isolated to one passage in the Bible and it is commonly mentioned in many verses, as in the next example:

"And great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others, and they put them at his feet, and he healed them" (Matthew 15:30)

Thus, in the quotation above, the disabled were brought by the crowds, which are understood to be the non-disabled. Disability is then associated with no autonomy to do things by themselves. Rather than just classifying the type of disability, these are described by the symptoms of it. Hence, Disability is often interpreted as malfunction of organs or the lack of these. A representation of this definition of 'mute' is shown in several quotes as:
"But I am like a deaf man; I do not hear, like a mute man who does not open his mouth"
(Psalm 38:13)

"I am mute; I do not open my mouth, for it is you who have done it" (Psalm 39:9)

In the previous two quotations, it is defined a deaf man as someone who cannot hear and a mute man as someone who cannot talk. One might argue that mute can open the mouth; however, these lines were written around thirty-five centuries ago and it is probable that mute would tend to keep the mouth close if unable to talk. In the next verse can be also appreciated the definition of blind as unable to see:

"Hear, you deaf, and look, you blind, that you may see!" (Isaiah 42:18)

Moreover, it is in the next quote that can be valued the direct significance of being lame:

"Like a lame man's legs, which hang useless, is a proverb in the mouth of fools."
(Proverbs 26:7)

Thus, it is in the last quote that the legs of a lame person are hanging useless, which means that is not functioning correctly; therefore it is a pity to have legs and cannot walk.

In the passages above is seen how disability describes a limitation of an organ, as it is understood in a traditional manner, similar to how it is described commonly nowadays and also close at the perception from the medical model. Moreover, WHO described disability as "...as an umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions..." that seems similar as the classifications provided in the previous quotes; Thus, blind cannot see, mute cannot 'open the mouth' deaf cannot hear, and lame has 'useless legs'.

Supporting the conviction of the embodied model presented in the literature review, impairments are easily identified by the community and therefore classified. Hence, disabled in the Bible are definitely recognized and classified due to the obviousness of their limitations. However, social model supporters as Vygotsky (1993) classified disabilities into three different levels: while just the first level corresponds to the biological impairments, the second will focus on the sociocultural level and the tertiary on the higher mental functions. Defining disability by only pointing at the biological part would lead to exclusion of the disabled in the other two levels. However, it will be reviewed in the next questions, how exclusion appears to happen as a consequence of the beliefs associated to being disabled and not because of the biological uniqueness of the disability itself. For example, it will be
explained in the next subchapter how exclusion of blind people occurs for the beliefs connected to blindness and not because acknowledge of not being able to see.

It has been shown above that impairments are described from a perspective similar as the medical model, which relates impairment with a limitation. However, even if the impairments are real, it is the relationship with the other members of the society, and their manner the disability is perceived, that will deeply define it. For this reason, it is necessary to understand how the disability is perceived by the society in the Bible, what disability means in the society. McCloughry and Morris (2002) categorized disability as a challenge to divine perfection. For this reason, people with impairments were classified as blemish. For instance, the next quote describes what is understood to be blemish, among them the blind and lame:

"For no one who has a blemish shall draw near, a man blind or lame, or one who has a mutilated face or a limb too long" (Leviticus 21:18)

As shown in the previous passage, people with impairments or body anomalies are into the same category, labeled as blemish, which Groce (1999) argued denying that disabled could be catalogued as an homogeneous group. Moreover, the fact that people with disabilities are identified and grouped into groups, as the blind or lame, represent the perspective given by Gourgey (1994) in which disability is not relative and assumed in everyone’s body, but rather identified and tended to be classified.

During the next sub chapter will be reviewed the origin of disabilities stated in the Bible. These explanations on its origin will lead to an understanding of the sociocultural level of disability in the Bible.

**4.3 Origin of Disability**

During the analysis of the data were found diverse reasons for the appearance of disability corresponding to different periods; thus, it was followed a time sequence of events, in order to identified and interpret the reasons why those emerged. During the literature review there were described by Reinders (2011) three different explanatory possibilities for the origin of disability: the first possibility is that it was caused by blind fortune; the second, by God’s will, who is punishing sinners; the third option, because God is testing someone’s faith. McCloughry and Morris (2002) also classified the causes of disability in the Christian
tradition as a result of punishment, evil incarnation or disease. Nevertheless, those explanations of the origin of disability are attributed to the Christian tradition, but in this analysis will be shown how it is stated by the doctrine of the Bible. To truly define the origin of disability and its multiple interpretations, it is necessary to follow a chronological framework that will support how new beliefs emerged. For this reason, the chronological order of episodes will be highlighted when it is necessary to justify the interpretations provided.

Next, there will be mentioned and analysed the biblical statements regarding disability’s foundation. Hence, the first reason found regarding the origin of impairment is endorsed to God’s will, obtained early in the Old Testament, around 1400BC, in the next quotation:

"Then the LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?" (Exodus 4:11)

This verse establishes an absolute resolution of God’s power deciding who and how someone will become disabled. By following a chronological order and being this verse the first time disability’s origin is explained and attributed to God, seem that no other explanation may arise, otherwise it would contradict the word of God. However, the fact that statement is in a question could be understood as disability’s origin had been disputed to the power of God. Moreover, this strong statement of the origin of disability leaves no margin for other explanations: Who would dare to interpret disability rather than by God’s will?

On the next quote is presented an example of how God makes a person disabled, as a punishment for being a sinner:

"And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time." Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand" (Acts 13:11)

In the previous quote, it is described how God makes someone disabled, as it was described in the first quotation, God choses and has the power of making a person disabled. Moreover, disabled people also understand that disability comes from God’s election, and they accept God’s decision, as it is stated in the next quote:

"I am mute; I do not open my mouth, for it is you who have done it" (Psalm 39:9)

It seems that the belief of God’s will on disability is absolutely accepted by the community,
even for those who endure it, by accepting their fate as God had chosen them. However, God does not choose to make someone disabled randomly. The reason why a person becomes disabled is directly related by having committed a sin. Consequently, accepting that God has punished you with a disability also means the acceptance of being a sinner and the stigma it carries with it. This correlation between disability and sin is presented in the next quote:

"I will bring distress on mankind, so that they shall walk like the blind, because they have sinned against the LORD; their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung" (Zephaniah 1:17)

As has been explained, the belief of disability as a result of committing a sin appears to be widely accepted. Moreover, there is a correlation between the type of sin committed and disability acquired. Hence, impairment is related with the type of sin committed. For instance, if someone lies or talks with pride or aim to hurt, they are punished becoming mute, as presented in the next quotations:

"Let the lying lips be mute, which speak insolently against the righteous in pride and contempt" (Psalm 31:18)

"And I will make your tongue cling to the roof of your mouth, so that you shall be mute and unable to reprove them, for they are a rebellious house" (Ezekiel 3:26)

It is been presented how disability is only attributed to God, and no other possible cause. However, the correlation between sin and disability seems difficult to sustain through time. Having this direct consequence for sinners to become disabled appears to be a preventing measure to avoid sins in the community. Fearing God’s power on making a person disabled would not last long until the correlation sin-impairment is questioned.

4.3.2 The paradox of disability caused by sin

Previously, it was supposed that the correlation sin-disability would not keep permanent because of the much incoherence on it. For instance, if a person was a recognized sinner and did not have any impairment, the statements above did show no correspondence. On the opposite perspective, if someone had not sinned and suffer from health issues as disabilities or others, the explanations of the origin of disability had to be reconsidered. In the next paragraph, it is related the story of Mephibosheth, a child who became disabled at the age of
five. This case represents the dilemmas presented above; thus, quoting from the Bible:

"Jonathan, the son of Saul, had a son who was crippled in his feet. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel, and his nurse took him up and fled, and as she fled in her haste, he fell and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth"

(2 Samuel 4:4)

So, according to the previous statements taken from the Bible, the manner someone becomes disabled is because he has sinned and God resolves to make him disabled. However, in the scriptures it is told how Mephibosheth became lame as his nurse dropped him. Thus, there is not shown any direct implication of God. In fact, while reading this passage appears that the reason why the child became impaired is that he fell and impact with the floor. However, it was stated above that is only God who makes people disabled, so it could be God that made him fall and be lame. Nevertheless, Mephibosheth is told to be only five years old, what makes reflect on what type of sin had he committed to deserve such castigation.

It possibly happened that through stories like this, devotes started to query the origin of disability with questions as: Did Mephibosheth deserve to be punished? Perhaps was his nurse fault? Was the nurse being punished through Mephibosheth disability? If a five years old had sinned sufficient to be castigated that way, there must be some other reason from God to do so. Gourgey (1994) argued that one of the reasons given by the Christians to explain disability is that "bad things happen to good people" (p.75).

As a result, it seems that episodes like the one described above, which occurred some centuries after the statements assigning all responsibility for disability to God, started to change the interpretations about the origin of disability. It was still believed that God that made him disabled, as it was stated in the previous books of the Bible. However, the reason that God had to make a person impaired probably started to change.

To summarize, it seems that the origin of disability was still attributed to God but not directly related to sin commitment. Moreover, this relationship has been condemned by authors as Webster (2007), who reported that Christianity link disability and sin having not proof any nexus between them. However, it looks reasonable to fear the consequence of not accepting disability as coming directly from God, because to contradict God’s word could be terrible as it was stated on the Holy Scriptures. Nevertheless, it is during the New Testament that disability was understood as a consequence of multiple reasons, as seen in the next section.
4.3.3 Is there any other cause for disability?

It has been seen previously how God used that disability to punish sinners. However, it seemed to turn into different explanations because of the inefficiency to explain all cases under those dictates, as has been seen in the previous question. Those slightly new interpretations were written approximately four centuries after the Exodus, where it was first stated the origin of disability.

It is in the time of the New Testament that a whole new ways to interpretation is noticed. Back in the literature review, was explained how Rogoff (2003) described the cultural changes due to “culture is not static” (p.51). However, in the religious setting around the Bible, culture develops around the commandments directing it. Thus, the culture represented in the Bible is nourishing on preceding beliefs, represented in biblical texts. This new interpretations of former beliefs are recurrently manifested in the New Testament, coexisting with the old beliefs which are still represented in the writings. There is a confrontation between the old beliefs and the new interpretation of those. For instance, in John 9 the disciples of Jesus asked him about one man who had been blind from birth, as it is shown in the next quote:

"As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him" (John 9:1-3)

This paragraph suggests that Jesus understand disability in a new interpretation of God motives, rather than punishing for a sin. Moreover, the fact that the blind person was born blind confused the disciples to identify who had been the sinner. Furthermore, they understood that to become blind, someone had sinned, but not necessarily the person who is disabled. This interpretation corresponds to the offered while describing Mephibosheth’s case, as it seems savage to punish someone who had just born for someone’s else sin, as he could not have sinned if was just born. Finally, Jesus attributes the authorship of the disability to God, but not for the reasons stated in the Old Testament.

Jesus announces that God used disability with some other reason rather than punishment. However, it appears to be widely accepted that sin was directly linked to disability, as presented in the next example:
"So for the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, "Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner." (John 9:24)

In the last quote, disability is attributed to God as a result to punish a sinner. It is seen that beliefs stated in Old Testament were still currently used. Moreover, it had been related how disability corresponded to the sin committed. Hence, in the New Testament, centuries after that correlation was dictated, losing the speech was understood as a consequence of being unfaithful. Consequently, this correlation between an organ limitation and sin is spread trough time, not varying in some cases. In the next quote, Zechariah became mute because he did not believe angel Gabriel words, stated in the New Testament:

"And when he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he kept making signs to them and remained mute" (Luke 1:22)

Creamer (2008) defined the reasons for God to make someone disabled as next: as punishment, a test of faith, an opportunity to build character or to inspire others, for the power of God to be made patent, to show someone had lost faith, or as a mysterious result of God’s will.

Even if the old beliefs, which accredited directly disability to God, were still common in the society, Jesus accepts other reason for disability rather than the work of God in someone. One common explanation is that a demon or a spirit causes disability. For instance, these are some passages where it is clearly related those causes to the source of the impairment:

"And someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute" (Mark 9:17)

In the previous quote, disability is indorsed to a spirit. Thus, parts of the society believe that disability is cause for other reasons rather than God punishing a sinner. In addition, demons are also often labeled as responsible for impairments. The next examples show this interpretation of demons causing disabilities:

"As they were going away, behold, a demon-possessed man who was mute was brought to him. And when the demon had been cast out, the mute man spoke. And the crowds marveled, saying, "Never was anything like this seen in Israel!"" (Matthew 9:32-33)

"Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw" (Matthew 12:22)
"Now he was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke, and the people marveled" (Luke 11:14)

As shown above, it is accepted by the community that a demon or a spirit possesses some people making them disabled. Nevertheless, the disciples understood that disability was an act of God punishing sinner. Thus, they interpreted disability as caused by God to punish a sinner but did not understand who was the sinner. Perhaps, situations like this made flourish the belief that demons and spirits were behind the origin of impairments. The multiple examples provided in the Bible attributing disability to demons and spirits suggests that those beliefs were quite common and consequently older than the reason given by Jesus, who credited disability to some mysterious work of God. Furthermore, Jesus also seemed to believe that spirits and demons could cause disability, as it is explicit in the next quote:

"And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again" (Mark 9:25)

The reason for this beliefs contradicting what was first stated in the Old Testament may come from stories as the one described from Mephibosheth, or anyone who had been born disabled. To the questions formulated as how can be that someone is disabled if is not a sinner? Probably answers following the reasoning of the statements of the Bible would have been that guilt someone born disabled would come from the parents. Moreover, in cases as a good man who becomes disabled, it may be something else, perhaps a demon or a spirit.

It seems that new explanations for disability came after the misapprehension of the old model, the incapacity of the former paradigm to explain all cases of disability. Therefore, it was no longer all disabilities origin by God’s willpower, as it seemed something evil was better blamable, unclean spirits and demons. Not being the only speculations of how disability was formed, the spectrum of possible reasons for disability is amplified to diseases and plagues, as in the next example:

"In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many who were blind he bestowed sight" (Luke 7:21)

The quotation above is definitely remarkable for several reasons: First, it relates disabilities to be caused by diseases and plagues, which do not directly associate impairments with evil or mystical. The second reason is that disability is approached from a closer perspective to
the medical model. It has been said that the culture evolutions to new customs constantly, as old paradigms fail to answer an issue in the paradigm. This line between paradigms will not be obvious but can be followed by how beliefs are transformed.

One of the reasoning followed conclude that disability and sin were not connected is that some disabled might not sin while sinners remained 'healthy'. To support the hypothesis of this disconnection some examples will be shown were people seem not to be disabled but described as sinners:

"And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire" (Matthew 18:8)

"And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell" (Mark 9:45)

The quotes above suggest sinners do not have to be punished with a disability but they are still sinners. In addition, the next verse suggests that not having a disability means that a person has been cleaned from previous sins:

"For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins" (2 Peter 1:9)

This last verse still supports the idea of disabled being punished for their sins, but implies that all sinners do not have to be disabled, which is also supported in the next passage:

"Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind." Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, "Are we also blind?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains" (John 9:39-41)

As a summary, it has been exposed how beliefs towards the origin of disability had changed due to the social events and need to adapt the beliefs to new requirements. I agree with Reinders and Creamer about the explanations towards the origin of disability but appear necessary to describe the evolution of those beliefs as described in the Bible. Nevertheless, during the analysis of the origin of disability based on the data collected, a new theme of exceptionally importance arose, which is how disabilities disappear, or with other words how to heal disability; this will be described in detail on the next question.
4.4 Healing Disability

In this section of the analysis will be described the relation between disabilities and healing. Disability is explained according to the paradigm selected; thus, definition of what healing means is also relative to the paradigm implanted. For this description, healing will be described embedded in the statements seen above about its origin. In addition, it will also be compared with the medical model, due to some similarities that will be detailed below.

However, healing as is represented in the Bible has different connotations than the medical model, as will be reviewed. The next paragraphs will also focus on who can heal disabilities and how. As pointed out by Finkelstein (1980), the medical model emphases the origin of disability in the individual. In the Bible, disability is primarily caused by an individual’s sin; consequently, it is also understood disability as something to address individually.

Furthermore, Mitra (2006) suggested that the aim of healing in the medical model is to minimize suffering and bring the patient to what is considered 'normal'. In the Bible is shared a similar perspective of the aim of healing. The following examples illustrate how is understood in the Bible to be healed:

"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped" (Isaiah 35:5)

"the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them" (Matthew 11:5)

"And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them" (Luke 7:22)

Thus, shown in the previous examples, to be healed means to get back the abilities taken away by the impairment. Previously in the analysis, was studied the origin of disability; Hence, to heal disability is tightly linked to the origin of it, as it is understood to be the reverse act. Moreover, the mode disability can be 'cured' will be explained in the next paragraphs. Early in the Bible almighty God was punishing sinners by using disability; subsequently, the only cure to disability was through God’s will. This understanding is represented clearly in the next instances:

"Now the hand of the LORD had been upon me the evening before the fugitive came; and he had opened my mouth by the time the man came to me in the morning, so my mouth was
opened, and I was no longer mute" (Ezekiel 33:22)

"On that day your mouth will be opened to the fugitive, and you shall speak and be no longer mute. So you will be a sign to them, and they will know that I am the LORD"

(Ezekiel 24:27)

As seen in the previous citations, the power to heal is attributed to God. Theology understands, according to Avalos (1995) that God is the only cause for disability and the only one able to heal it. Therefore, it has been commented in the previous questions how God provides with disability as a consequence of a person’s sins. For this reason, it is also understood in the Old Testament that to be healed is only through God, forgiving the sin that made someone disabled. Furthermore, the reason why God forgives sins is shown in the next quote:

"The LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous" (Psalm 146:8)

The quote above states that God heals because of the love professed to those who are oppressed. Thus, God punishes with disability to those who sin, but at the same time heal them because they are beloved. Moreover, God would forgive and heal the disabilities once it is understood that there was a sin committed, as represented in the next quote:

"Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed." (Isaiah 6:10)

As suggested by the previous declarations in the Bible, God forgives sinners by erasing their disabilities. Moreover, it could be understood that if disability remains, God has not forgiven the person, perhaps because the individual has not acknowledged the sins or those persist. Subsequent, the statements of the Bible lead to believe that not being heal means that sins remain. If disabilities are continuing on the individual and he or she is not healed, would mean that sins are still being committed or have not being forgiven by God. These statements from the Bible provide with a tight reasoning, leaving small space for interpretation of how disabilities are healed and the reason for it. As the origin and disappearing of impairments are directly associated to God, no other explanation of healing seem to be possible. However, it will be described how healing in The New Testament was interpreted, based on the figure of Jesus Christ.
4.4.1 So, how can Jesus heal disabilities?

It has been described above how was believed that only God could healed the disabled; It was stated in the Bible and the community glorified God after disabled were healed. Therefore, it has been seen that there were an evolution of the explanations causing disabilities. The spectrum of possible rationalizations producing disabilities became wider and varied, and disabilities were not always attributed to God. They could be a consequence of diseases, plagues, demons or spirits. Nevertheless, it is during the New Testament that controversy raised up dramatically, because new statements contradicted the originals. Thus, in the time of the New Testament were accepted more explanations for disabilities, but the cure of those was still only attributed to the power of God. For this reason, when Jesus was healing disabled, he was considered a demon; only God could heal, if someone else did, it was because he could probably have the power of a demon, which was able to cause disabilities. It is in the next verse how Jesus was compared to a demon after healing a blind person:

"Others said, "These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?" (John 10:21)

In the previous section of the analysis, it was seen how demons were considered to have enough power to cause disabilities. However, they were evil, so it possibly would not make sense that they healed anyone, it was against their nature. Thus, when Jesus healed impairments, his actions were understood by some to be demoniac, because only God could heal. The idea of God healing disabilities and demons making people disabled seems a contradiction between old and new beliefs, as in the Old Testament both, making disabled and healing are divine performance. An example of this contradiction is represented in the next quote, where a blind, which was considered a sinner, attributes the healing to Jesus, while others believed it was trough God:

"So for the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, "Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner." He answered, "Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." (John 9:24-25)

As a summary, God seemed to remain as the only one able to heal impairments. Therefore, God cannot be responsible for some disabilities, suggested an evil force to be blamable for it.

Moreover, the fact that Jesus healed a man blind from birth is received with surprise as they stated to be the first time something like that had happened. Thus, this fact reinforces the idea
of someone having the power to heal was new, and that until that moment had been always credited to God. The next verses displays noticeably this new situation:

"Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind" (John 9:32)

"And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, "He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak" (Mark 7:37)

As seen previously, Jesus heals those with impairments and the nexus between healing and God is questioned. However, Jesus himself believes that his power to heal is given by God, which would explain how is able to do so. Thus, Jesus proclaims himself to be sent by God with the aim to heal people with disabilities. This assertion is exemplified on the next quotation:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed" (Luke 4:18)

According to the previous quote, it is then finally God responsible for healing disabilities. For this reason, when Jesus performs any healing God is glorified. A typical representation of it is displayed in the next verse:

"so that the crowd wondered, when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled healthy, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they glorified the God of Israel" (Matthew 15:31)

When Jesus heals there is a disagreement on how this is possible to happen; this division is interpreted based on the values provided in the Bible. First, part of the community believed that Jesus was a sinner because did not keep the Sabbath (a day destined to rest). This situation is represented in the next paragraph:

"So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, "He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them" (John 9:15-16)

However, others believed that if Jesus could heal disabilities cannot be a sinner because healing is attributed to God’s power. This relation between healing and proximity to God is
shown in the next passages, where once again there is controversy between beliefs; this time confronting the belief of disability as a consequence of sin to despise the man who had been blind’s opinion:

"If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" (John 9:33-34)

These confrontations between different interpretations of how disability can be cured appear similar as those when a new paradigm is necessary. As described by Kuhn (1970, as cited in Chalmers, 1999) paradigm shifts occur when there are anomalies to explain through the existing patterns. At the time of the New Testament new explanation of how disabilities were caused and healed emerged. However, it seemed that the origins of disabilities had been interpreted before as were more accepted by the community, while healing was something new. Moreover, by accepting new manners of the source of disability leaded to new understanding of how it could be healed.

One other similarity between the medical model and the Bible is Jesus presented as a "healer". Therefore, ‘patients’ came to him to get healed, as people go to the doctor to become healthier. This similarity is suggested in the next quote:

"And great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others, and they put them at his feet, and he healed them" (Matthew 15:30)

Moreover, as Jesus is able to heal disabilities, it is also understood that he could heal other diseases. In the next verse is seen how some people understood that if Jesus was able to cure disabilities, he could also prevent dead:

"But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?" (John 11:37)

The power of Jesus to heal appears to be effective once disabled show their faith on it. Thus, it is assumed by Jesus that the capacity of healing is on the disable’s faith. This correlation is exemplified on the next examples:

"What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him. The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see." "Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road" (Mark 10:51-52)
"When he entered the house, the **blind** men came to him, and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord" (Matthew 9:28)

In addition, Jesus performs healing through touching or spitting as will be shown in the next instances:

"And they came to Bethsaida. And some people brought to him a **blind** man and begged him to touch him" (Mark 8:22)

"And they brought to him a man who was **deaf** and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him" (Mark 7:32)

"And he took the **blind** man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, "Do you see anything?"" (Mark 8:23)

Jesus is represented on these passages as able to cure through touching and spitting. It appears as a situation where a doctor heals a patient, who has hope on his skills. Fox and Kim (2004) suggested that all disabilities go through some medical understanding before being better understood. Nevertheless, during the previous paragraphs, has being discussed how the origin of disability is understood as multiple causes by the time Jesus performed healings. However, it seemed that that the first step to get healed is to admit to be guilty. Orsi (2005) shared this point of view suggesting that sickness is a direct consequence of sin according to the Bible. During the process of healing, disabled people often beg to Jesus in order to get healed, even if Jesus understood disability as caused by other forces rather than just God’s punishing for being a sinner. Next examples, illustrate this situation:

"And as Jesus passed on from there, two **blind** men followed him, crying aloud, "Have mercy on us, Son of David" (Matthew 9:27)

"When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" (Mark 10:47-48)

In the previous quotations, disabled ask for mercy, which implies to be forgiven. As Cusack (1997) described, the ability to heal of Jesus remains on his capacity to forgive sins. Thus, this reinforces the idea that sin is connected to disability, and the disabled are guilty and stigmatized, which will be discussed in the next section.
4.5 Attitudes towards disabilities

Attitudes towards disability are revealed in the Bible as an intricate setting. From the data analyzed resulted unlike interpretations of attitudes regarding impaired. One of those attitudes leads to an extremely exclusion, while another one is more compassionate, still charged with biases. However, attitudes towards disability depend of the beliefs regarding disability. For this reason, as new interpretations emerged, attitudes also changed with them. Furthermore, conflicts between those attitudes are recurrent in the Bible, as will be presented in the next paragraphs. So, at the beginning of the Old Testament, the Bible provided with strong commandments guiding attitudes towards disabled, as seen in the next quotations:

"You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: I am the LORD" (Leviticus 19:14)

"Cursed be anyone who misleads a blind man on the road. 'And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'" (Deuteronomy 27:18)

From the previous quotes can be concluded two things: First, God protects disabled and those who mistreat them will be cursed. Secondly, the quote describes a probably common circumstance for those with impairments, to be cursed and mistreated. In addition, this commandment suggests that the situation of misleading blind people or cursing deaf is common, as there would not be needed to condemn a type of behavior if it had not happened before. In addition, McCloughry and Morris (2002) stated that disability is understood, according to the Christian tradition, as an object of pity and charity, which suggests that those treat protecting disabled were not taken seriously or were ineffective. An example of how abusing disabled was accepted and common in the society of the time is represented in the next quotation:

"and you shall grope at noonday, as the blind grope in darkness, and you shall not prosper in your ways. And you shall be only oppressed and robbed continually, and there shall be no one to help you" (Deuteronomy 28:29)

As has been appreciated above, the statement seen in the last passaged contradicts those condemning the abuse of disabled. It represents how disabled are seen and treated in the society. Thus, disabled will be robbed and oppressed even tough the commandments dictated previously forbade doing it. Moreover, those who dare to harm disabled would be cursed and
punished by God. Nevertheless, the last quote suggested that this type of mistreatment, even after being censured, would occur and God assumes it, which seem highly contradictory. Moreover, in the scenario where disabled were abused and God did not punish them, this type of behaviors will be reinforced, as no consequence would materialize from those actions. Nevertheless, it is typically stated in the Bible that God loved the impaired and eventually will save them, as represented in the next quotes:

"And I will lead the blind in a way that they do not know, in paths that they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I do, and I do not forsake them" (Isaiah 42:16)

"In that day, declares the LORD, I will assemble the lame and gather those who have been driven away and those whom I have afflicted" (Micah 4:6)

It is noticed that disabled throughout the Bible carry stigma. Moreover, Claassens (2013) and Olyan (2008) suggested that disabled still confront discrimination and stigma nowadays, based on religious beliefs. Stigmatization and discrimination of disabled as it is represented in the Bible, has an analogous form to what people with disabilities grieve today. Those stigmas and beliefs seem to have existed before the statements condemned them in the Bible, as mentioned above. However, the manner those were denounced in the biblical texts, not only seem ineffective but reinforces the stigma. As it was related in the previous questions, while describing the correlation between sin and disability, it is found a strong statement relating sin and disability. According to the statements in the Old Testament, if disability is the result of sin, seems logical to identify all disabled as sinners. On the other hand, there is also a strong commandment regulating attitudes towards disabled; however, if someone cursed a disabled, the result is that they will be punished. However, if there is not reprisal for mistreating impaired, could be understood as a normal act that need no penalty.

As was described along the interpretation of impairment’s origin, it is during the time of king David that a change in the attitudes is glimpsed. David hated the blind and lame, and his approach to impaired is described in the next example:

"And David said on that day, "Whoever would strike the Jebusites, let him get up the water shaft to attack 'the lame and the blind,' who are hated by David's soul." Therefore it is said, "The blind and the lame shall not come into the house" (2 Samuel 5:8)

As seen above, the attitude of David towards disabled fits on the contradiction described
previously: disabled should not be maltreated according to the scriptures, but it is expected to happen and it indeed happened. Thus, David is acting against the commandments exemplified above, which he is aware of, through hating and excluding disabled. It is been told before the story of Mephibosheth and his relationship with David. Thus, David changed his approach to him regardless of his disability. David welcomed him to dine at his table, which suggests an acceptance in his nearest circle. This situation is indicated in the next quote:

"So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, for he ate always at the king's table. Now he was lame in both his feet" (2 Samuel 9:13)

It is described in the previous passage how David became more accessible to disabled, when he accepted Mephibosheth to be sharing the same table and restoring Mephibosheth’s social status. Hence, Mephibosheth came from an important family, but being disabled excluded him of social prestige. However, it can be seen the progression of the attitude of David towards disabled, from hating them to sharing the table. The main issue with this story is to understand why David changed his attitudes towards impaired. As was detailed previously in the analysis, the fact that Mephibosheth became lame from both feet and still David allowed him to share the table, lead to some ideas. One could be that disability became worse but it was not directly related to any sin. The second idea is that David did not just curse or hate the disabled; he included Mephibosheth into social practices, which suggests that David changed his perspective radically. The inclusion of Mephibosheth in David’s social life supports the idea of an evolution in the relation sin-disability. Moreover, the practice of David including Mephibosheth at the table became recurrent in the New Testament. The importance of David’s practice appears crucial for a development of the attitudes, as Rogoff (1990 &1998, as cited in Rogoff 2003) pointed out how individuals are not only influenced by cultural processes, but they are also active figures on its development. Thus, in the New Testament are found similar quotations to the relationship of David and Mephibosheth:

"But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind"

(Luke 14:13)

It has been doubted that not following the right behavior to impaired might not have any punishment even if that was condemn in the Old Testament. On the contrary case, Job, who is supporting the disabled and acted according to the statements in the Old Testament, suffered constantly and started to question why it happened to him. Thus, questions could have emerged as: Does it have any consequences the behavior towards disabled? In the next
quotation is presented how Job acted supporting disabled:

"I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame" (Job 29:15)

In contraposition, coming back to Mephibosheth, who had been accepted by the king, still suffered from discrimination and is treated faultily by his servant, who took advantage of his disability. Thus, negative attitudes towards disabled were common and even if the king had replaced them for some more inclusive, the reality seemed to be cruel to impaired. In the next passage is described how his servant betrayed Mephibosheth:

"He answered, "My lord, O king, my servant deceived me, for your servant said to him, 'I will saddle a donkey for myself, that I may ride on it and go with the king.' For your servant is lame" (2 Samuel 19:26)

As has been exemplified in the last quote, it appears that during the Old Testament disabled were accused to be sinners and excluded because of the religious beliefs. In the next question will be detailed how religious dogmas do not just exclude them of the civil society but also from the religious ceremonies.

4.5.1 Disabilities and religious ceremonies

Not just disabled were considered sinners; they also had to face various types of discrimination, among them, for disabled was forbidden to participate in any religious ceremony. Thus, religion not only accepts that disabled will be harmed, but also excludes them from religious rituals and sacred places. McCloughry and Morris (2002) described that disabled were excluded from religious participation, as they were considered blemish. These statements, where disabled are excluded in religious ceremonies, are reiterated on diverse verses of the Bible. However, the most powerful commandment regulating the access of disabled in religious practices is presented in the next quotation:

"For no one who has a blemish shall draw near, a man blind or lame, or one who has a mutilated face or a limb too long" (Leviticus 21:18)

As seen in the quote above, disabled were completely excluded from any place dedicated to religious practice. This limitation in the religious activities remind to those offered by WHO, when was stated that "...disability as an umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations
and participation restrictions..."

The evolution of beliefs regarding disability’s origin it is been one of the major guidelines in this analysis, also affecting the relation between disabled and sacred places. During the New Testament, it appears that Jesus was breaking boundaries when he healed disabled at the temple, as in the following example:

"And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them"  
(Matthew 21:14)

It had been said above how the Old Testament prohibited impaired to be near any temple; however, Jesus performed some healing inside a temple, which contradicted the commandment reviewed before. This access to the temple for disabled could be an outcome of new beliefs, which not necessarily related disability to sin, as could be caused from other sources. For those who were impaired from birth it seemed that disability was less associated to sin, as was reviewed formerly in the analysis. This supposition is nourished on the next quote, where a person lame from birth was taken to the temple:

"And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple"(Acts 3:2)

As seen in the last quotation, perhaps the type of disability or how was cause would mean different origins.

Nevertheless, during the next question, it will be described how disabled were marginalized in the society and how it is exemplified in the Bible.

4.5.2 Disabled and marginalization

It has been seen before how disabled were clearly left apart on religious ceremonies. Moreover, at the beginning of this question, the commandments regulating attitudes towards impaired were also discussed. Swain and French (2000) suggested that disability is a consequence of the oppression by the society. In a society where the Bible is the main source to regulate life and beliefs and afterwards it has been discussed during this analysis, can be concluded that disabled were extremely marginalized.

When it was reviewed how Jesus healed disabilities, on of the requirements for this to happen
was to accept their own guilt. By accepting this guilt means that a person is aware of being a sinner, which made him/her disabled. Allport (1954/1979) suggested that in cases where minorities are highly influenced by the predominant culture, those minorities assess themselves using the values of the other groups. Thus, disabled see themselves as outcast, sinners and blemish. In the next example, two blind men ask for mercy to get healed, which suggest that they admit their sins:

"And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!"

(Matthew 20:30)

In the next quotes, it will be offered an example defining de grade of marginalization of disabled:

"They wandered, blind, through the streets; they were so defiled with blood that no one was able to touch their garments" (Lamentations 4:14)

As seen above, disabled were classified sometimes as 'untouchables'. In the next example will be seen how impaired are qualified as outcast and it also suggest the shame that being impaired attaches:

"Behold, at that time I will deal with all your oppressors. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth".  

(Zephaniah 3:19)

Thus, the previous quote implies that disabled are ashamed of themselves, probably because of the reasons provided above by Allport, taking the other groups values and using them to judge themselves. Another example of how disabled are excluded is appreciated in the next quotation:

"Your cords hang loose; they cannot hold the mast firm in its place or keep the sail spread out. Then prey and spoil in abundance will be divided; even the lame will take the prey"

(Isaiah 33:23)

The previous quote suggests that is not usual for the lame to take a prey. Moreover, they seem not to count when the benefits are divided. Thus, it is recurrent in the Bible to include disable in a situation where they are usually not; by doing so, it is used to probe that something is extremely abundant, as seen in the previous quote, or something is extremely
easy, as will be shown in the next quote:

"And the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who said to David, "You will not come in here, but the blind and the lame will ward you off"--thinking, "David cannot come in here" (2 Samuel 5:6)

In the last quote, is described that even the blind and lame will ward David off; it implies that the most discriminated and margined ones will be still able to reject David. Then, it is related that the defense of Jerusalem could be done even for the blind and lame.

It is often described in the Bible, as could have been seen in previous quotations, that disabled are usually beggars and group with those in the same conditions. That disabled have no rights could be insinuated in some of the quotations reviewed during this analysis. However, it seem more obvious in the next quote:

"Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute" (Proverbs 31:8)

Therefore, disabled apparently had no rights and were represented usually as beggars. A typical representation of a blind person in the Bible is as related in the next quote:

"As he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging" (Luke 18:35)

To conclude this part of the analysis regarding attitudes towards disabled, it is important to see what the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states in its article 18 about freedom of beliefs. It is in this article granted the right for everyone to chose and manifest religious beliefs trough its practice. However, it has been seen how some religious beliefs might lead to exclusion and marginalisation of some minorities. Therefore, there is a conflict between religious freedom and the right of those afflicted by that freedom. In addition, Goodley (2011) remarked the importance of the context of people with disabilities. It seems hard to achieve inclusion of those who are excluded by religious beliefs without violating the right of those beliefs to be manifested. This appears to be one of the main obstacles towards inclusion based on results obtained in this study. Furthermore, beyond the beliefs represented in the Bible, the use of words describing disability is commonly used with other connotations. Thus, during the next question, these connotations will be analysed as well as their relevance.
4.6 Connotations of disability

During the first part of this chapter was described the concept of disability in the Bible. The four key words used to locate disability in the texts, showed how impairments were classified based on the type of malfunction of organs, similar as the classification in the medical model. Consequently, blind were described as unable to see, deaf were unable to hear, mute did not open the mouth and lame had useless legs. Nevertheless, the aim of this part of the analysis is to describe and interpret other meanings attributed to disabilities. Watson (1997) proposed that meanings of words are related with the used given by the individuals of a society.

According to Oliver (1996) simple and negative notions derived from disability reaffirms the negative perception of the concept. Therefore, those simplistic ideas associated to disability build stereotypes, which as Claassens (2013) pointed out, are one of the main obstacles faced by disabled in the society. Probably the main stereotype found during the study of the Bible was that people with disabilities are suffering, which will be discussed in the next paragraphs.

4.6.1 Suffering & disability

Suffering is related early in the Bible as one of the consequences of being disabled according to French and Swain (2004). They found that suffering was usually associated to being disabled. The next quotation describes the manner disabled suffer trough social exclusion and marginalization:

"and you shall grope at noonday, as the blind grope in darkness, and you shall not prosper in your ways. And you shall be only oppressed and robbed continually, and there shall be no one to help you" (Deuteronomy 28:29)

In the previous quote, which had already been studied, it is presented that the society will make disabled suffer. The previous quote does not mention any physically pain but it seems clear that suffering will be implied to the life of those who are impaired. Nevertheless, in the next quote will be exemplified how a disabled person describes the feeling triggered by being disabled:

"I was mute and silent; I held my peace to no avail, and my distress grew worse"

(Psalm 39:2)
The last quote describes someone who has an incredibly internal pain associated to the fact of being impaired. It seems natural to suffer when stigma, attitudes and beliefs towards disabled tag them as sinners and it is assumed that they have to suffer. Therefore, Lamé, Peters, Vlaeyen, Kleef, and Patijn (2005) suggested that beliefs make pain more intense and difficult to find relief in those patients with chronic pain. Thus, some of the suffering attributed to disabled is provoked by the society and its beliefs, not just by the impairments.

How disabled suffer in the Bible, seem to be in part explained on the beliefs stated in it, inducing them to suffer. It has previously been described how disabled are expected to face social exclusion and almost any type of harm, and how this is established in the society. In addition, as it has been discussed, disability is believed to be a result of sin, according to the primary statements of the Bible, and believed by many regardless new explanations emerged. Moreover, according to Kitchin (1998) a vast part of the society have internalised and accepted misconceptions towards disability, which lead to the social exclusion of disabled. However, as seen during this analysis, disabled seem to be excluded not only because of the misconceptions of disability, but rather because it is an accepted custom from the early scriptures.

One repeated scene during the theme of healing disability was how disabled seemed to seek desperately for a cure. It seems apparently to be a recurrent behaviour, as the voice spread announcing how Jesus was healing disabilities. Nonetheless, the manner this assistance is required is trough asking for mercy in a dreadfully way. The next example shows this common interaction between Jesus and disabled and the way they ask for help:

"And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!"

(Matthew 20:30)

During the previous analysis was suggested that one of the conditions for disabled to heal was to assume the sins that had been committed. For this reason, disabled perceive their selves as being punished and therefore, needed to be forgiven. It is arduous to describe how people with disabilities feel and reflect about their impairments. But, if they internalized that disability is a curse for being a sinner, would explain the desire to be healed, and the internal agony. The next quote illustrates how the suffering of disabled is compared with those who are prisoners in a dungeon:
"to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness" (Isaiah 42:7)

In the previous quote blind are compared with prisoner, which confirm the relationship between disability and being punished. Disabled are understood in the Bible as people who are suffering. Therefore, disability does not only mean limitation towards certain activities or being dependent of others. This suffering is somehow characterized for being 'internal suffering', and also suffer is incited by the society. During the next paragraphs will be appraised how other negative attributions to disability are presented in the Bible.

4.6.2 Other uses for disability

It has been described how disabled are marginalized because of the meanings implied of being impaired. Therefore, those attitudes are guided, as are based on rigid beliefs with a simplistic correlation between sin and disability. These beliefs lead directly to stereotypes, as are based on simplistic and discriminatory ideas. It was seen in chapter two how Allport (1954/1979) stated the reason of a stereotype as "function is to (rationalize) our conduct in relation to that category" (p.191). Thus, it seems that the attitudes towards disabled reflected in the Bible developed as described in the subchapter attitudes towards disability. However, those attitudes were sometimes contradictories. This contradictions could be partially explained on how stereotypes of disability and how concepts were used in the language.

Oliver (1996) argued that negative attributions to words referring disabilities contribute to the persistence of disability as a negative concept. Thus, the use seen of disability that has a negative figurative meaning leads to the permanence of the negative implications. During this analysis was found that the key words to identify impairments were commonly used with other meanings, rather than describing body limitations. In the next quote is seen how blind is used with other meaning than a visual impairment:

"Here I am; testify against me before the LORD and before his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Or whose donkey have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Or from whose hand have I taken a bribe to blind my eyes with it? Testify against me and I will restore it to you" (Samuel 12:3)

In this last quote, the use of blind is not literal; it is used to describe how a bribe is accepted
and the decadence that it carries. *Blind* has in this verse some common characteristics as the regular use of blind being impairment, which is the immorality and the connection with a sin.

The next example show how *mute* is used with other meaning than the impairment:

"You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to *mute* idols; however, you were led" (1 Corinthians 12:2)

In the previous quote, *mute* means *false*. Thus, using *mute* to signify *false* reinforces the negative connotations of being mute and through this use in the language, negative connotations seem to spread and maintain permanently, as was described previously. Disabilities are often used in comparisons, sometimes not having an specific meaning but implying negative connotations as are used to show contrast to positive attributions, as in the next example:

"For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, *blind*, and naked" (Revelation 3:17)

As shown above, *blind* is in the verse used to mean exactly the contrary as stated in the first part of the sentence. Therefore, blind would imply the opposite to rich and prosper, and catalogued with wretched, pitiable, poor and naked. One more example of how blind has negative connotation is shown in the next quote:

"You *blind* fool! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred?" (Matthew 23:17)

Above the word *blind* indicates that they were corrupted by material things and abandoned faith. Therefore, the meaning of blind, as was shown in a previous example means unfaithful and greedy. This meaning for *blindness* is still common nowadays, which reinforces the idea that negative connotations and uses of the language prevent social inclusion, as the impairment has negative attributions even if it does not denoted literally to it. Therefore, the connotations of disabilities are not just based on religious beliefs but are also part of cultural representations, as language is the most important part of any culture.
4.7 Summary

This chapter four has presented the results from the analysis, along with the discussion of the findings. The method used to present the findings was through grouping them into themes with the aim of providing answer to the research question. This system allowed the researcher to address the problem from diverse perspectives, which seemed more adequate due to the nature of the problem. Therefore, the chapter was divided by themes corresponding to the classification emerged during the analysis, but connecting the diverse sub-chapters, as they are all part of one single topic. In addition, the literature presented in chapter two was compared to the findings of this study, whether was used to support these or to argue them. The next chapter corresponds to the conclusion and it will be the end of this master thesis.
Chapter 5. Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This master thesis has described disability in the Bible from diverse perspectives following the statements contained in it. This study focused on how the Bible defines the origin of disability and its healing, attitudes towards disabled and connotations of disability. During this chapter will be presented the main findings of the study and its summary. First, the findings from the analysis will be compared with previous studies within the topic and were chosen for their relevance in this study. Following, it will be presented the findings indicating new contribution in the field. Finally, it will be suggested new areas of expansion in relation with the findings appeared how this master thesis could be supported in future researches.

5.2 Comparison with previous studies

During the literature review in chapter two were presented different models aiming to describe disability. These models seem to replace the previous one when a new paradigm is threatened by no providing efficient answers to the issues emerged. Moreover, when a new model flourish does not mean that the former ones are forgotten or discarded. It has been compared recurrently how disability in the Bible had some similarities and differences with those models. It is during the New Testament and through the figure of Jesus that the Bible encountered more similarities with the medical model. The explanation for this according to Rogoff (2003) is that culture develops permanently; thus, the medical model seemed to have emerged from the reality represented in the Bible.

It was argued during the literature review, how Christianity explained disability by religious dogma. The dogma shown at the beginning of the scriptures, seemed unlikely to be interpreted in other ways rather than what was explicit on it: disability is a direct consequence of sin. However, this correlation was being threatened as the reading progressed, finding slightly different explanations to disability. These were compatible with the statement attributing God to be the only capable to make someone disabled but with other reasons than punishing a sinner, as Creamer (2008) agreed. Moreover, it is in the New Testament that new justifications for the appearance of impairments prospered, which coincide with McCloughry
and Morris (2002) who added other reasons rather than a punishment, as could also be an evil incarnation and diseases.

Beliefs are not static and change besides culture and throughout times, offering new explanations of disability. These new interpretations of disability were still supported by previous beliefs. Hence, the new explanations of disability were built over the beliefs stated in the Bible, and often confronted or interchanged with the old dogma. The origin of these new interpretations of disability emerged after the former interpretation could not sustain all cases. It was the necessity of new knowledge that let the society add new understandings. However, during the times of Jesus, it was believed that disability was caused by a demon, a spirit, by disease and plagues but disabled were often accused of sinners.

Attitudes towards disability seemed to follow the path of the new interpretations, showing some contradictions in the scriptures. Thus, disabled are constantly marginalized; even tough God curses those who mistreat them. However, by not appearing consequences for those who mistreat, and explicitly stated in the texts, disabled are supposed to remain outcast and suffer.

This study agrees with previous ones that described disability in the Bible as multiple explanations. However, during the next question will be detailed the new contributions of this master thesis within the field.

### 5.3 New contributions of the study

The aim of this study is to offer a new perspective of how beliefs in Christianity, through the biblical scriptures, describes and perceives disability. Reading through the biblical scriptures the origin of beliefs towards disability and how the society of the time reacts to those beliefs has been the focus of the study. Using interpretation of the data available in the Bible has leaded to some unique conclusions presented in chapter four. Therefore, at the beginning of the Bible, disability was understood as a punishment from God, a direct consequence of sin. However, sometime later, there was a more compassionate posture towards disabled, in the figure of David. It seemed to be the origin for new interpretations in how disability appeared. How this readjustment of the meaning from the Bible really occurred is open to interpretations. The fact is that there are new beliefs to respond to what causes disability, and there must be a transition towards these beliefs. The interpretations given in the analysis is
that the explanation of God punishing sinners’ through disabilities did not fit all cases. The concept of disability then turned around from the writings, from God is punishing you, to a wider range of explanations. Even tough disability is interpreted by new means, not always understood as a result of sin, disability had already a negative meaning and connotation. If explanations for disability are based on the scriptures of the Bible, even if new reasons arise, it will be always recurred to the statements in it, as it is considered sacred.

The Bible provides a guidance of behavior in a Christian society. In fact it provides with rules and ways of behavior in which disability is notice constantly. How non-disabled people must interact with the disabled is repeatedly stated on its lines. Still, this guidance changes trough the Bible as society changed itself too and more events were added to the scriptures. The result is that it turns into a more inclusive interaction, but just in isolated cases. Anyhow, its own previous statements influence the Bible’s new ones. For example, in the early Old Testament disabled are accused of sinners and their perception from non-disabled and the Bible promotes punishment and social exclusion. Contrary to this, in the New Testament, Jesus tries to change people mind about their beliefs towards disabled, which offers a whole different perspective than the one in the Old Testament. Ironically, Jesus has to fight against the lectures given by the Old Testament, but he was still influenced by those beliefs.

As a resume, the unique point of view of this thesis provides with explanations of how beliefs, are transferred and mutate throughout the Bible, perceiving the transition between beliefs as society changes. Thus, new beliefs are formed from former beliefs even if they are contradictory; there is an implied connection between them.

5.4 Suggestions for further research

This thesis has focused only in one religion, Christianity, and its main book, The Bible. It seems obvious that a complementary research, to find out if similar results will be discovered in other religions, would lead to interesting conclusions. Moreover, Rogoff (2003) suggested that while studying a social interaction, as it is the case of this study, as represented in the Bible, the individuals cannot be separated from the social context, which means that this study cannot be used to understood other cultures, but could be repeated in other contexts.
It could be done, for instance, a parallel study using similar tools to analyse historical documents from another religion. Other possible use is to go further on this topic having the Bible as the main source of information to collect data and compare with some data obtained from participants. In this case it could be measured the accuracy from the results from this master thesis and a case study. Nevertheless, the design of this must be done being aware of the failure of the original thesis intend.

As has been related above, beliefs towards disability have experimented an evolution. If other religions in the world have similar origins, it would be extremely interesting if the evolution occurs in a parallel plane, for example comparing with Islam. Thus, perhaps could support the idea of religion as a reflection of the society, and how societies evolution.

Nevertheless, the final aim of this research is to promote inclusion of people with disabilities. Taboos, misconceptions, prejudices, and any belief associated to disability will prevent inclusion to become real. Eiesland (1994) called to the `community of God` to renew symbols and practices to become inclusive. The use of `symbolic language` is also criticized by Webster (2007), who beliefs that those symbols lead to stigma and exclusion. However, as has been discussed during this research, there is a confrontation between freedom of religious beliefs and practices and the right of those with disability to be truly included. Thus, from this thesis is suggested that further researches searching for solutions in this paradox must be followed.

A further study could involve a comparison between the results given in this research and the perception that people with disabilities have nowadays, to compare which grade of the beliefs, connotations, stereotypes persist in today`s society, or how those have been changed. A more complete study will involve other sources of qualitative data as interviews with disabled people within a Christian community. In addition, transcultural studies comparing differences and similarities between beliefs and stereotypes based on various literature sources from different religions will be interesting.
Reference List


